BEUTEPANZERS OF WORLD WAR II

Captured tanks and AFVs in German service

STEVEN J. ZALOGA

ILLUSTRATED BY FELIPE RODRÍGUEZ

NEW VANGUARD 332

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INTRODUCTION

During World War II, the Wehrmacht captured a significant number of enemy tanks and other armored vehicles. According to a report by a team under Generalmajor Hellmuth Reinhardt on the utilization of captured materiel, "The *Beutepanzer* (war-booty tanks) did not play a role of any great importance for Germany in World War II." This stands in considerable contrast to other captured weapons, especially artillery, where captured weapons constituted a significant fraction of the Wehrmacht's arsenal during the war. Not only were they modest in numbers, but most were assigned to secondary missions such as security and anti-partisan operations.

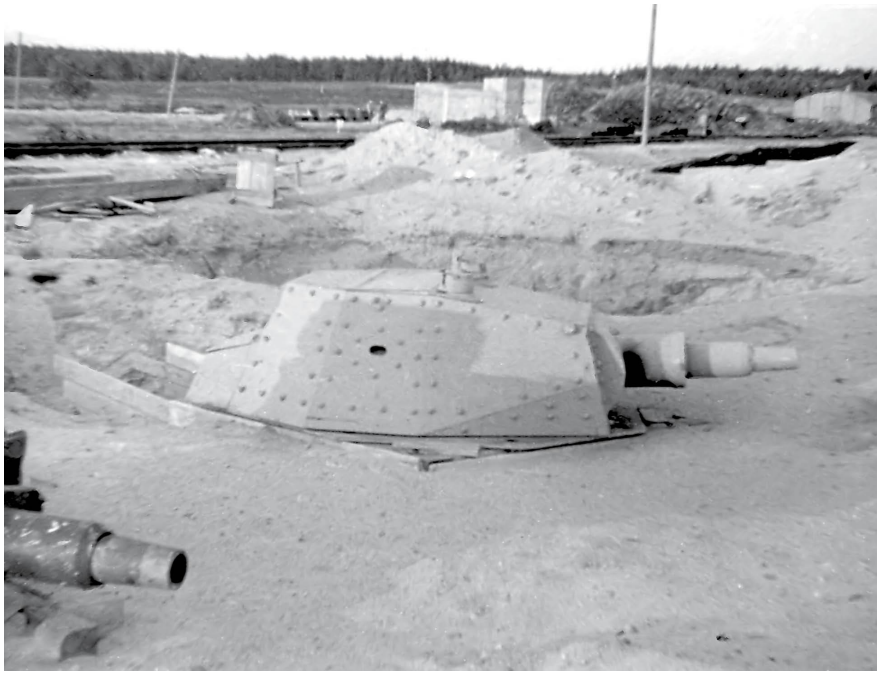
Yet Beutepanzers have retained enduring fascination for their sheer variety and exotic service: Dutch armored cars in the battle for Leningrad in 1941; French tanks on the Arctic Circle in Norway and Finland; Polish tankettes in Alsace in 1945; Italian tanks in the siege of Vienna. The list goes on and on.

A 2in. mortar team of the Polish 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division in position near a knocked-out Sturmgeschütz M42 75/34 851(i) during the fighting along the Senio River at Faenza, Italy, on February 13, 1945. The tactical number on the Semovente has been partially overpainted so that only the first “2” remains.

The Beutepanzers were seldom used in front-line Wehrmacht units. In most cases, the Panzer force found that the foreign designs were not compatible with German tactics. This was the case with French tanks, which usually used single-man turrets that were incompatible with the fluid style of German Panzer tactics. In other cases, such as the Soviet Union, the supply of spare parts was an insurmountable problem. Germany came into possession of large numbers of Italian tanks and assault guns in September 1943 when Italy withdrew from the Axis, and these were extensively used in Italy and the Balkans for anti-partisan missions.

In only two cases – France and Italy – were Beutepanzers adopted on a standardized basis. This was because Germany took control of both French

and Italian industrial facilities and supply depots, and so was able to maintain and support these vehicles in service with spare parts. In the case of most other countries, their tanks and AFVs were used on an impromptu basis, with no centralized support. In most cases, Beutepanzers that were captured in operable condition were kept in service in German units until the local supply of spare parts ran out. This was notably the case with Soviet tanks, which were captured in large numbers but were seldom operational in any significant number due to a lack of replacement parts.



The final production of the Italian P40 tank turrets was earmarked for fortifications in the foothills of the Italian Alps as part of the Voralpen-Stellung fortification program. These were armed with the German KwK L/24 gun rather than the original Italian 75mm gun.

In some cases, Beutepanzers served as the basis for AFV conversions, most often the conversion of tanks or other tracked vehicles into self-propelled guns. Most famously, the Becker Baukommando converted several hundred French tanks and AFVs into a bewildering assortment of self-propelled guns and specialized AFVs. These played an unusually large role in Normandy in 1944, since the 21.Panzer-Division – which fought there as part of the 7. Armee – was largely reconstructed from 1943–44 using these vehicles. In total, about 590 French tanks were converted into self-propelled guns.

The chart here gives a quick picture of the number of Beutepanzers in use in June 1943 by front. This data underestimates the number actually in use,

since many units on the Ostfront (Eastern Front) made small-scale use of captured Soviet tanks that were not reported to central authorities in Berlin. Also this chart does not include tanks converted into self-propelled guns or for other applications such as prime movers or recovery vehicles. By way of comparison, the Wehrmacht had 2,900 other Panzers in operational use in June 1943, so the Beutepanzer represented about 20 percent of overall Wehrmacht operational tank strength.

Beutepanzers in use by Front, June, 1943

Type	East	Balkans	West	Norway	Finland	Total
Char B1 bis	6	17	81			**104**
H 38	15	96	149	68	33	**361**
R 35			58			**58**
S 35	2	43	67	17	16	**145**
Renault FT			12			**12**
P 178	30		33			**63**
KV-1	2					**2**
KV-2	1					**1**
T-26	1					**1**
T-34	50					**50**
T-70	4					**4**
Total	**111**	**156**	**400**	**85**	**49**	**801**

The composition of Beutepanzer strength changed dramatically in the final years of the war. While French-built tanks made up the bulk of the Beutepanzer arsenal from 1940–43, by 1944 these vehicles were obsolete and mechanically exhausted. In addition, the majority of French Beutepanzers and self-propelled guns were deployed in France, and so were lost in the summer 1944 fighting.

Following the surrender in Italy, the German and Italian units of Armee Ligurien concentrated much of their surviving equipment near Ivrea. The tanks here are a mixture of equipment from the fascist Gruppo Leonessa as well as German vehicles. In the center foreground is a Carro commando M42/Panzerbefehlswagen M42 772(i) with a mixture of Carro M41 and Carro M42 tanks, called PzKpfw 736(i) in German service.

Italy's capitulation led to the Wehrmacht seizing over 600 Italian tanks and AFVs in September 1943. The overall number of Italian Beutepanzers increased into 1944 due to continued production at Italian plants. Consequently, Italian types became the predominant Beutepanzer in the final year of the war. Nevertheless, Beutepanzers played ony a minor role in the strength of the Panzer force in the last year of the conflict since they were increasingly obsolete and confined to minor theaters such as Italy, Norway, and Yugoslavia, as is shown on the accompanying table. By April 1945, only about 11 percent of Panzers and 16 percent of StuG assault guns were Beutepanzer types, the majority being French and Italian types.

Beutepanzer strength, April 10, 1945				
Army Group	**Beutepanzer**		**Beute StuG**	
	Total	**Operational**	**Total**	**Operational**
Süd				
Mitte	17	11		
Weichsel	35	20		
Nord				
Kurland	17	1	2	2
East subtotal	*69*	*32*	*2*	*2*
Südost (Balkans)	43	27	31	26
Südwest (Italy)			172	144
West			82	67
Norwegen	107	79		
Dänemark				
West subtotal	*150*	*106*	*285*	*237*
Total	**219**	**138**	**287**	**239**

Due to the sheer number of different tanks and AFVs captured by Germany, this short survey can only detail a fraction of them. This book does not cover Czechoslovak tanks and AFVs, since they were integrated into the Wehrmacht before the formal outbreak of the war in September 1939. The approach here is primarily chronological, starting with the early captures of the Blitzkrieg era of 1939–41.

POLISH TANKS AND AFVS

German records indicate that the Wehrmacht recovered 111 Polish tanks and tankettes of the roughly 700 in service at the start of the war on September 1, 1939. Of these, the majority were the small TK and TKS tankettes. Of the more modern types, the Wehrmacht recovered about two dozen 7TP light tanks, a locally manufactured version of the Vickers 6-ton export tank. An assembly point and repair facility was established in Łódź. In June 1940, the Leichte Panzerkompanie Warschau was created for security in Warsaw, using TKS and 7TP tanks. Another light tank company was organized in May 1941 for the Führer-Begleit-Bataillon, using the 7TP, but this unit was short lived after the 7TPs were replaced with the Czech-built PzKpfw 38(t). The 21 7TP tanks were retired to Panzertruppe Schule Wunsdorf near Berlin.

A Polish Czołg lekki 7TP (*jednowieżowy*) captured by the German Army and put back into service during the September 1939 campaign. About 20 of these remained in German service from 1940–43, used primarily by the Ordnungspolizei and other police formations for internal security missions.

In January 1941, the OKH (*Oberkommando des Heeres*: Army High Command) ordered that remaining Polish tanks and tankettes would be

converted into artillery tractors, totaling 55 TKS and 16 7TP AFVs. In subsequent years, the dwindling stockpile of Polish AFVs were scattered into various Heer and Luftwaffe police and security units. At least three 7TPs were issued to the *Ordnungspolizei* (Security Police) training center in 1941. Some TK and TKS tankettes were provided to the allied Croatian army and took part in anti-partisan fighting in Yugoslavia.

DUTCH AND BELGIAN TANKS AND AFVS

The Netherlands had a very modest armored force in 1940, including 12 Pantserwagen M.36 (Landsverk 181), 14 Pantserwagen M.38 (Landsverk 180), and 12 Pantserwagen M.39 (DAF Pantrado 3) armored cars. A few Landsverk L 181 armored cars were handed over to 10.Polizei-Panzer-Kompanie, which served on the Russian front. Belgium had a much more substantial armored force, including 10 Renault ACG1s, 42 T15 light tanks, and 237 T.13 tank destroyers. Aside from some impromptu use in the 1940 campaign, it would appear that the Wehrmacht made little or no subsequent use of these tanks. The turrets of the ACG1s were recycled as Panzertürme (static armored gun turrets) for the Atlantikwall.

A Polish TKS tankette being inspected by a US soldier in Camp de Bitche in March 1945 following the conclusion of the fighting in Alsace. These tankettes were used mainly by police and security units.

One of the few remaining traces of the Belgian tanks of 1940 was the use of ten remaining APX-X turrets from the ACG-1 tanks for fixed defense as Panzertürme on the Belgian sectors of the Atlantikwall, such as this example at Ostend.

FRENCH TANKS

During the 1940 campaign in France, the Heereswaffenamt organized special field repair units as part of the *Chef der Heeresversorgung* (Chief of Military Supplies), which had the dual role of salvaging German as well as captured French tanks. At first, the units collected captured French tanks at temporary assembly points. Towards the end of the campaign, the French Army's Parc Entrepôt de Matériels (equipment warehouse depot) in Gien was selected as the main assembly area. There were already about 400 French tanks at the Gien depot, mainly old Renault FT tanks but also some newer Hotchkiss and Somua models.

On July 10, 1940, the OKH instructed four of the Panzer divisions to create a *Panzerbeutestab* (War-booty tank staff) to locate and recover French and other Allied tanks and AFVs in their regions: 1.Panzer-Division (Loire basin); 4.PzDiv (Brussels); 8.PzDiv (Nancy/Lorraine); and 10.PzDiv (Sedan/Ardennes). The initial plan was to transfer tanks in good mechanical condition back to their original French tank plant. However, the recovery effort yielded disappointing results and the French plants were not enthusiastic about working for Germany. Eventually, the Gien depot was expanded into the *Panzernachschublage*r (tank supply depot) Gien to act as a centralized tank spare parts center to rehabilitate captured French tank equipment. Daimler-Benz was given a contract to set up a repair facility at the Renault plant in Boulogne-Billancourt on the outskirts of Paris. Other repair shops were set up in the Paris area at the Somua plant in Saint-Ouen and the Hotchkiss plant in Saint-Denis. The Renault plant was bombed by the RAF in March 1942, and as a result, the Daimler-Benz tank repair facility took over the Issy-les-Moulineaux plant that had been run by MAN (Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nürnberg) to repair artillery tractors.

The Renault FT was widely used by the Luftwaffe for air base security. This example was abandoned in the courtyard of the Palais du Luxembourg, the seat of the French Senate during the fighting for Paris in August 1944. The French Army rebuilt most Renault FTs in the 1930s with the Reibel 7.5mm machine gun, as seen here.

The accompanying chart shows the principal types of French AFVs that were used by the Wehrmacht. Some tank types such as the FCM36, AMR33, and others were recovered and placed into storage, but not regularly issued to Beutepanzer units. In total, the Wehrmacht recorded that 4,930 French tanks, AFVs, and armored tractors had been captured. However, many of these were battle-damaged and were used mainly to cannibalize parts.

A PzKpfw R35 731(f) of Panzer-Kompanie Paris that was captured by troops of the French 2e Division Blindée on Rue de Rivoli near the Hotel Meurice during the liberation of Paris on August 24, 1944. It was turned over to the French resistance, with the Balkan cross on the turret hastily painted over with the French tricolor flag.

French armored vehicles used by Wehrmacht		
Type	**Kenn number**	**Number used (approx.)**
Renault FT	730(f)	500
Renault R35	731(f)	840
Hotchkiss H38/39	735(f)	600
Somua S35	739(f)	300
Char B1 bis	740(f)	180
AMD Panhard 187	204(f)	190
Renault UE	630(f)	1,200
Lorraine 37L		300

Although there were some half-hearted efforts made to restart French tank production for the Wehrmacht, French industry was starved of raw materials in favor of German plants. The German Army preferred to use any remaining French production capability for truck production rather than tanks. In the short term, the Wehrmacht planned to raise a few Panzer regiments later in 1940, with an eventual aim to create two Beutepanzer divisions. Hitler later increased this to four divisions. This was based on previous experiences from 1938–40 using Czechoslovak tanks to create new Panzer divisions.

The French tanks proved to be far less adaptable to German tactics and doctrine than the Czechoslovak types. Furthermore, there were lingering problems with the tanks' durability and shortage of spare parts. The Wehrmacht was not happy with the small French infantry tanks such as the Renault R35 or Hotchkiss H39 due to their size and modest armament. Both types shared the same APX R turret. This one-man turret was a major drawback since it obliged the commander to serve as both gunner and loader, distracting him from controlling the tank and observing the terrain. The cupola on the roof of the turret had awkward vision devices and prevented the commander from following the usual German practice of keeping his head outside the tank for situational awareness. In contrast, the Czech-built PzKpfw 38(t) had a two-man turret, a good commander's cupola, and a much superior gun.

French resistance fighters took over this Renault R40 infantry tank from Panzer Kompanie Paris during the liberation of the French capital in August 1944. This final production version of the R35 infantry tank was used in very small numbers by the Wehrmacht.

Of the two French infantry tanks, the Germans favored the Hotchkiss H38/39, in particular the late-production version with the long 37mm SA38 gun. The Hotchkiss was powered by a 120hp engine compared to the 82hp engine of the Renault, giving it better automotive performance. To improve

the APX R turret, the cupola was cut down and a split hatch added in place of the dome to allow the tank commander to stick his head outside the turret. Some tanks were fitted with German radios. The Wehrmacht sometimes distinguished between the Hotchkiss armed with the short 37mm SA18 gun (known as the H38) and the later type with the long 37mm SA38 gun (the H39), but this distinction was often ignored in status reports.

Even the larger Somua S35 cavalry tank and Char B1 bis battle tank were an awkward fit for the Panzer divisions due to their small turrets. The Char B1 bis featured a one-man turret, while the Somua had a one-and-a-half-man turret with an enlarged turret ring that permitted the radio operator in the hull to assist in loading the gun. Neither type was a comfortable fit for German tactics. As in the case of the infantry tanks, the cupola on the turret roof was cut open and a split-hatch fitted.

The Char B1 bis, in spite of its size and armor, had other odd technical problems. The hull-mounted 75mm gun was aimed by the driver via a complicated transmission that permitted precision turning. However, this transmission was prone to breakdown. Even without this mechanical issue, the combined driver/gunner feature was troublesome. The driver was provided with a stereoscopic optical rangefinder for making gun corrections, further distracting him from his usual driving tasks.

A BEUTEPANZER FROM THE 1940 CAMPAIGN

1. SpPzWg202 (h) (Landsverk 180), 22.Infanterie-Division (Luftlande), Soviet Union, 1941

The 22.Infanterie-Division (Luftlande) was a specialized air-landing division using gliders. It took part in the 1940 campaign in the Netherlands, where it captured at least one of the Dutch Army's Pantserwagen M.38 (Landsverk 180 armored cars). It is unclear whether this was repainted in the usual Wehrmacht dark gray or retained its original dark green Dutch finish. In the event, it was prominently marked with white Balkan crosses when used in Russia in 1941.

2. LeFH 16 10.5cm auf Geschützwagen MkVI(e), Batterie 15, Artillerie-Regiment 227, 227. Infanterie-Division, Soviet Union, 1941

This was the first of the Becker conversions, used to mechanize his own artillery battery during the fighting on the Leningrad Front in the autumn and winter of 1941. It consisted of a World War I leFH 16 10.5cm howitzer mounted on a captured British Vickers MkVI tank chassis. The standard camouflage scheme on Wehrmacht tanks from 1938–40 was an overall finish of *Dunkelgrau* Nr46 (dark gray), later redesignated as RAL 7021. A secondary pattern of Nr45 *Dunkelbraun* (dark brown) was added. This scheme was officially ended in July 1940 in favor of a uniform dark gray finish, but it appears to have been used on these vehicles. The GP1 marking on the hull side indicated Geschützpanzer 1 (Armored Gun 1). On the front is the red/yellow divisional star insignia, and next to it the artillery regiment insignia.

As a result of the problems with the Char B1 bis, the Somua was favored. More than half of the available Char B1 bis were converted into flamethrower tanks or self-propelled guns. The Somua, due to its generous internal volume, was often used as a command tank in Beutepanzer units, otherwise equipped with the smaller French infantry tanks.

Tank turrets removed from French Beutepanzers were usually recycled for use as Panzertürmen for defensive works along the Atlantikwall and Südwall. This is an example of an APX 1CE turret from a Somua S35 used in a strongpoint on the waterfront in Marseilles in 1944.

In late 1940 and early 1941, work focused on preparing French tanks and other armored vehicles for participation in the forthcoming Operation *Barbarossa* against the Soviet Union. Of the various French AFVs, the Wehrmacht's favorite was the French cavalry's AMD Panhard 178 (Automitrailleuse de découverte). This was adopted into German service with modest modifications such as the substitution of German radios. About 190 of these were used by the Wehrmacht during the war, starting in June 1941 on the Eastern Front.

There was also a pressing need for artillery prime movers. Aside from the many unarmored French artillery half-tracks, the Renault UE tractor could be used for light artillery. About 1,200 were employed by the Wehrmacht during the war. The Renault R35 infantry tank was not viewed favorably for Panzer

use, so starting in February 1942 about 200 had their turrets removed to serve as a prime mover for heavy artillery.

Due to Italian intervention in the war with France in 1940, Germany pledged to provide six battalions of Renault R35 and Somua S35 tanks to the Italian Army. Only 124 R35s were eventually delivered, and they were primarily used to form the 131º Reggimento Carri in June 1941. This unit was deployed on Sicily at the time of the Operation *Husky* landings in July 1943 and saw extensive combat against the Allies. Only 32 Somua tanks were turned over, being used to form a battalion in the 32º Reggimento Carri serving on Sardinia.

A Pzkfw 38H 735(f) of SS-PzAbt7, 7. SS-Freiwilligen Gebirgs-Division “Prinz Eugen,” conducting anti-partisan operations against Tito’s partisans in Yugoslavia in 1943. This is a late-production example with the unditching tail to help in trench crossing.

The first major Panzer conversion program was the PzKpfw B2 (Flamm), an effort to convert about 80 Char B1 bis into flamethrower tanks. Three different designs were examined, with a Daimler-Benz configuration selected as the preferred type. However, the army wanted some flamethrower tanks available in time for the Soviet invasion in June 1941, and the Daimler-Benz design required new sub-assemblies that were not ready. As a result, two *Zwischenlösung* (interim design) configurations from Köbe and Wegmann were accepted as expedients until the Daimler-Benz design was ready. The Wegmann design used the same small flame-turret developed for the PzKpfw

II (Flamm). It was mounted on a shelf on the hull gun mantlet, with the flame fuel and compressed air tanks placed inside. These were issued to PzAbt(F)102. The Köbe design had a fixed tube fitted in place of the 7.5cm gun and used a small motor to power a pump instead of using compressed air to shoot the flame mixture. About two dozen of these interim flamethrower tanks were completed prior to the Soviet invasion and they equipped two companies.

A PzKpfw 38H 735(f) of PzAbt211, part of Kampfgruppe Tornio, lost to the east of Tornio during the fighting with Finnish troops in early October 1944 as the German forces attempted to retreat to the Gulf of Bothnia on the coast of Finland. This Hotchkiss has a very rough Zimmerit antimine finish applied to the surface of the armor. (SA-Kuva)

The Daimler-Benz design was fitted to a traversable ball mount located in place of the 7.5cm gun. The front hull was modified by extending the glacis plate over the flamethrower to provide the operator with a protected vision device. The fuel was contained in a large, armored container at the rear of the tank. Conversion of about 60 of these began in November 1941. These were distributed to at least three units:, PzKp223 on the Eastern Front, Panzer-Brigade 100 in France, and PzAbt213 on the Channel Islands.

Tank turrets for the Atlantikwall

One of the more significant uses of French tanks by the Wehrmacht was the employment of their turrets for static defense. The old Renault FT tanks were obsolete, mechanically exhausted, and thus unsuitable for field use. About 600 French tanks had their turrets removed when converted to self-propelled guns.

These surplus turrets were mainly used in the Atlantikwall program along the French coast. They provided a small, well-protected, and well-armed strongpoint. A few tanks, especially the obsolete Renault FTs, were simply dug into place. Most of the turrets used as strongpoints were mounted on a special Ringstand, popularly called a Tobruk, named for a type of concrete strongpoint built by the Italian Army around Tobruk in Libya. As the Ringstand name implies, they were characterized by a circular opening that was adaptable to various types of crew-served weapons, such as machine guns and mortars. They could be modified to mount a tank turret by using a steel mounting plate with a suitable ring adapted to the turret ring.

A PzKpfw 38H 735(f) captured by the US Army's 75th Division during the fighting near Ostheim in Alsace on January 31, 1945. These were most commonly seen in small numbers in local security units at the beginning of 1945.

This Panzerturm program began in April 1941 to exploit the large number of available Renault FT turrets. German fortifications often used a standardized design developed by fortification engineers in Berlin, called a

Bauform (Construction design). Bauform Vf67 was developed specifically for small tank turrets. Some specialized derivatives were developed later for specific turret types, designated with an FPzDT number (Festungs Panzer Drehturm: Fortification Armored Turret). The principal types are listed below.

German tank turret fortification types		
Tank	**Turret**	**Ringstand types**
Renault FT	Girod, Omnibus	Vf15; Vf67; FPzDT 4807
R35/ H38/39	APX R	Vf67v, Bauform 235; FPzDT 4808
Somua S35/Char B1 bis	APX 1CE/APX 4	Vf67
Panhard 178	APX 3	Vf67; FPzDT 4811

The Atlantikwall program began in earnest in 1942. Three turret types predominated on the Atlantic Wall in France and the Low Countries. Ringstand designs for the Panhard 178 turret were published, but so far as is known, none of these turrets were actually used on the Atlantic Wall.

By far the most common Panzerturm used on the Atlantic Wall was the World War I-era Renault FT turret. Both the Omnibus riveted turret and Girod cast turret were used. Most of these were armed with the Reibel 7.5mm MAC modèle 1931 machine gun that the Wehrmacht designated as MG 311(f). In the 1930s, the French Army had recycled the Puteaux SA18 37mm gun from many Renault FTs to be reused in the new Renault and Hotchkiss infantry tanks. The older Hotchkiss machine guns were replaced by the Reibel, which accounts for their frequent use by the Wehrmacht. There were still some 37mm gun-armed Renault FT turrets, but they were uncommon. For example, in the AOK7 (Armeeoberkommando 7: 7th Army high command) sector in Normandy there were 299 FT turrets in use in January 1944, of which 230 (77 percent) were armed with the Reibel machine gun. Only 69 Tobruks with FT turrets were armed with the 3.7cm KwK 144 (f), the German designation for the French Puteaux SA18 37mm tank gun.

The next most common turret type used on the Atlantic Wall in France was the APX-R (Atelier de Construction de Puteaux). This turret type was common between the Renault R35 and Hotchkiss H38/39 infantry tanks. Most of these were the improved APX R1 type manufactured since 1938 that was fitted with PPLRX-180P vision ports. This turret was most commonly armed with the Puteaux SA18 37mm gun, some of which had been taken

from the obsolete Renault FT in the 1930s as mentioned before. The final-production version of the APX R1 was upgraded with the improved SA38 37mm gun that had a longer barrel for better antitank performance. It was designated as the 3.7cm KwK 145 (f) in German service. However, these were very uncommon for fortification use because they were the favored type for use on Beutepanzers assigned to Wehrmacht Panzer units. Only about 30 APX R1 turrets with the 3.7cm KwK 145 (f) were used on the Atlantic Wall in France.

A PzSpWg AMR35 (f) (*Panzerspähwagen*: armored reconnaissance vehicle) of Division zbV539, a *Landesschützen* (literally "provincial riflemen," local militia) occupation division based in Prague. This was one of at least three AMR35s captured by Czech insurgents during the liberation of Prague and is seen here at a roadblock on Bartolomějská ulice. They served in Second Lieutenant Baumruk's platoon, which also included at least one Panzerjäger 38 Hetzer. The ČSR marking indicated Československá republika (Czechoslovak Republic).

The best of the tank turrets used for Tobruks were armed with the excellent 47mm SA37 gun, called the 4.7cm KwK 173 (f) in German service. There were two principal types, the APX 1CE from the Somua S35 and the APX 4, used on the Char B1 bis. Although externally very similar, the Somua type had a wider turret ring.

A PzSpWg Panhard 178 P204(f) armored car named Löwe (*Lion*) of Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 37, 7.Panzer-Division, in operation south of Kalvarija, Lithuania, at the start of Operation *Barbarossa* on June 22, 1941.

In spite of the availability of the standard Bauform Vf67 design, the majority of Panzer Tobruks on the Atlantic Wall in France were local adaptations, called *Feldmässigen Ausbaustand* (Field construction mounts). These were essentially similar to the standard Ringstand design, adapted for local conditions. For example, of the 422 Panzer Tobruks in the AOK7 sector in Normandy in January 1944, 73 (17 percent) were based on standard Ringstand designs, while 345 (83 percent) were local configurations.

The use of French tank turrets was less common on AOK19's Südwall along the French Mediterranean coast than in Normandy and the Channel coast. This was because the Südwall construction program started much later, and by late 1943 the supply of French tank turrets was running dry. Instead, turrets from the obsolete PzKpfw II and PzKpfw 38(t) were used. As in the French case, these light tanks had been converted into self-propelled guns, making their turrets surplus.

There were a few exotic tank turrets on the Atlantic Wall, including at least two Churchill turrets from tanks captured at Dieppe in August 1942 and ten 47mm APX-X turrets from the Belgian ACG 1 tanks. The chart here shows the quantities of Panzer Tobruks on the Atlantic Wall in France and the Low Countries. The numbers are probably not complete, since some of the data comes from January 1944, several months prior to D-Day; some Tobruks had

been added in the meantime. The Atlantic Wall on other coasts such as Denmark and Norway had a small number of French turrets, but mainly turrets from other sources.

Panzer turret Ringstand deployment on the Atlantikwall, 1944					
	FT	**APX-R**	**APX-1CE/APX4**	**German/other**	**Total**
AOK15***	171	30	7	12	**220**
AOK7**	299	72	47	4	**422**
AOK1*	59	13	2		**74**
AOK19****		61	20	177	**258**
Total	**529**	**176**	**76**	**193**	**974**

**AOK1: Bay of Biscay (Atlantic)*

***AOK7: Normandy*

****AOK15: Pas-de-Calais, Low Countries*

*****AOK19: French Mediterranean Coast*

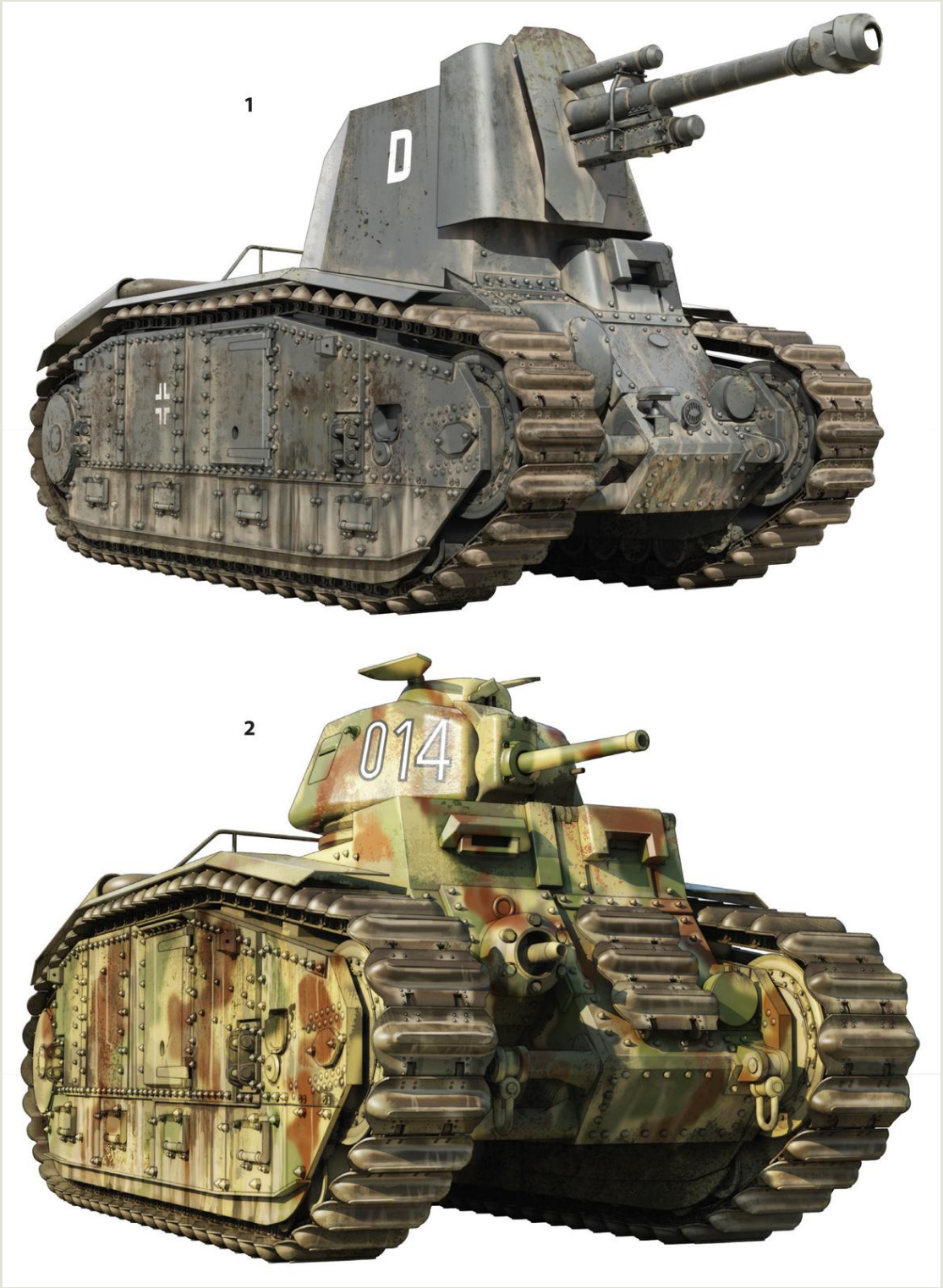
French Beutepanzer units

The first tank unit equipped with captured French tanks was PzRgt201, formed at the Gien depot in December 1940. These early units typically were organized around a light tank platoon (*leichter Panzer-Zug*), consisting of four Hotchkiss H39s with a single Somua S35 as the command tank. A Beutepanzer-Abteilung (battalion) had 18 Somua and 41 Hotchkiss tanks, while a Beutepanzer-Regiment with two battalions had 39 Somuas and 87 Hotchkisses. The plan was to create a larger Panzer-Brigade from two regiments. The first of these, Panzer-Brigade 100, was formed in France in early 1941, along with several additional regiments. In October 1942, Panzer-Brigade 100 consolidated many of the scattered French tank units created in France and eventually served as the basis for the reconstruction of the 21.Panzer-Division.

French tanks usually had their vision cupolas modified by cutting off the top of the casting and replacing it with a pair of hatches. This was done to provide better situational awareness for the Panzer commander. This is an example on the APX CE turret of a Somua S35.

In May 1941, an effort began to create security units using the obsolete Renault FT. A total of 1,704 examples of this World War I tank were recovered by the end of 1940, but only a small portion were put into German service due to their arthritic technical state. The Luftwaffe's Luftflotte Kommando 3 created the Sicherungspanzer der Luftwaffe (Air Force Security Tank force) using a hundred Renault FTs. These were used primarily for airfield defense in the Netherlands (25), Belgium/northern France (30), and western France (45).

B BEUTEPANZER CHAR B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1. 10.5cm leFH 18/3 (Sf) auf Geschützwagen B2(f), I./Artillerie-Regiment 93, 26.Panzer-Division, France, 1942

Sixteen 10.5cm leFH 18/3 (Sf) auf GW B2(f)s were issued to I./Artillerie-Regiment 93, of the 26.Panzer-Division in France in the spring of 1942. The battalion had three batteries, each with four guns, with the remainder of the vehicles in the headquarters detachment. The 26.Panzer-Division was sent to Italy in July 1943, but without these vehicles. They were ordered to be transferred to the 90.Panzergrenadier-Division on Sardinia. However, it is not clear if this transfer ever took place, and it is possible the vehicles were simply retired. These vehicles were plainly finished in the standard RAL 7021 *Dunkelgrau*. Each vehicle was identified by a large white letter repeated twice on the casemate. These letters were presumably sequential, with the highest known example being “N.”

2. PzKpfw B2 Flamm 740 (f), Stabs-Kompanie, Panzer-Abteilung.205, Le Havre, summer, 1944

This Char B1 bis had been converted to a Flammpanzer in the Daimler-Benz configuration, with a ball-mounted flamethrower in place of the usual 75mm gun. Panzer-Abteilung.205 was in the Pas-de-Calais area as part of Armeeoberkommando.15. After D-Day, it was deployed to Normandy in support of the 84.Infanterie-Division. It suffered such heavy casualties that it was disbanded and reorganized in July 1944. The vehicle is finished in the usual overall RAL 7028 dark yellow, with patches of RAL 6003 olive green and RAL 8017 red-brown. The tactical markings are the usual battalion style in white with a thin black trim. The “0xx” tactical number series was used by the Stabs-Kompanie (headquarters company), while the line companies had their company number as the prefix, for example 205 in 2.Kompanie.

At the same time, a variety of small security units were formed by the army for defense of Crete, Salonika in Greece, and Serbia using a variety of tank types. Security units were also created for various factories in Germany and the occupied regions. One of the most famous army security units, Panzer-Kompanie-Paris, was created in July 1941. In early 1942, security formations of the SS were allotted 250 Renault FTs, 30 Renault R35s, and 60 Hotchkiss H38/39s.

A PzKpfw S35 739(f) of Panzer-Abteilung.214 that was formed in January 1942 in Oslo. It has the standard modification of a scalped commander's cupola with split hatches added.

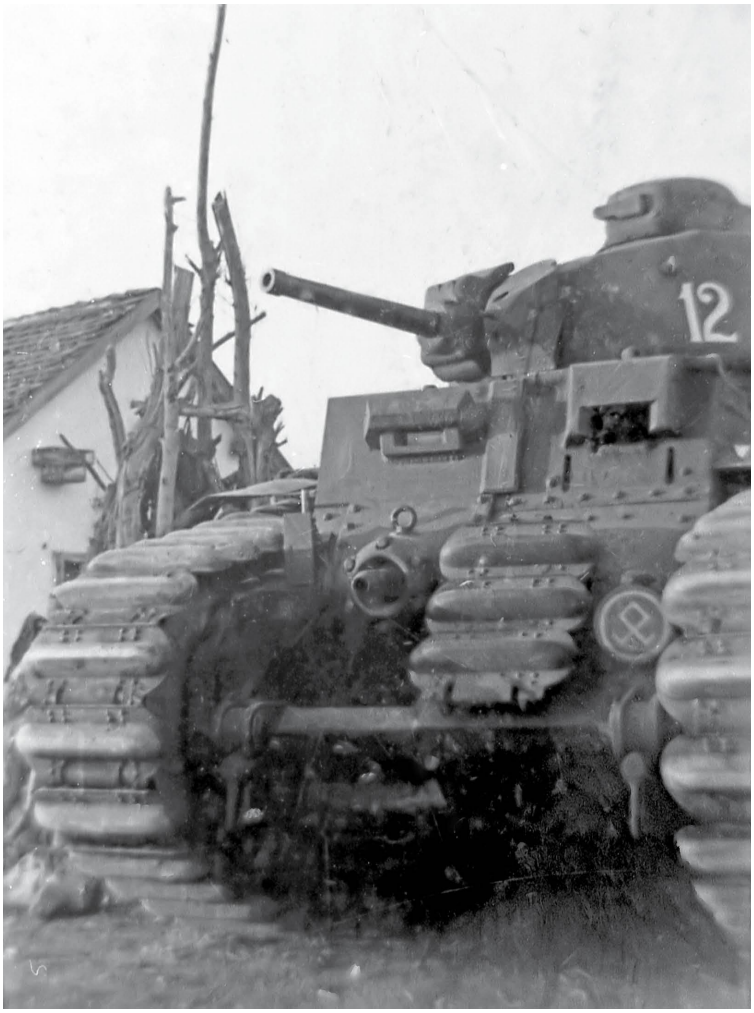
Aside from the flamethrower companies deployed during Operation *Barbarossa*, the first Beutepanzer unit to see extensive combat was 1./PzRgt202, which was dispatched in the autumn of 1941 to fight against partisans in Croatia and Serbia. It was later re-designated as PzAbt202 and spent most of the war in Yugoslavia in the anti-partisan role. By February 1944, its French tanks were mechanically exhausted and the battalion gradually converted to Italian tanks over the following months. Other units were dispatched for occupation duty, including PzAbt211 and PzAbt214 in Norway, PzAbt212 on Crete, and PzAbt213 on the Channel Islands. Besides these battalions, numerous small security units were created during the war for security tasks as well as anti-partisan operations. For example, in November 1941, a dozen Beutepanzer-Zügen für Sicherungszwecke were created for rear-area security operations on the Ostfront. These platoons typically were equipped with five PzKpfw H38s each.

The only Waffen-SS unit to be formally equipped with a Beutepanzer unit was SS-Division "Prinz Eugen," which received a Beutepanzer Kompanie in April 1942. This unit was involved in anti-partisan fighting in Yugoslavia at the time. The company was initially equipped with the Char B1 bis (Pzkpfw B2), though it subsequently converted to the Hotchkiss H39 (PzKpfw H38) in August 1943.

French tanks deployed by Heer, May 31, 1943						
Type	**S35**	**H38**	**R35**	**B1 bis**	**B2 Flamm**	**Total**
Eastern Front	2	15		4	12	**33**
Finland	16	33				**49**
Norway	17	68				**85**
Western Front	67	127	60	41	39	**334**
Southeast (Balkans)	21	92	22	17		**152**
Total	**123**	**335**	**82**	**62**	**51**	**653**

Most of the captured French tanks remained in France during the war. These were used on occupation duty and for training Panzer crews. The largest of the units in France, Panzer-Brigade 100, helped form the basis for the reconstituted 21.Panzer-Division in France in 1943–44. This is covered in more detail below. Panzer divisions on the Ostfront were often sent back to France for re-equipping and training, and these units often used French tanks on an interim basis during their training cycle.

At the time of the Normandy landings on D-Day, June 6, 1944, there were four Beutepanzer units deployed under OB West (*Oberbefehlshaber West*: High Command West), totaling 159 tanks. Of these, PzAbt205 was stationed with 15.Armee on the Pas-de-Calais and PzAbt213 on the Channel Islands. Panzer-Ersatz- und-Ausbildungs-Abteilung 100 (Tank replacement and training battalion) was assigned to support the 91.Luftlande-Division in the area west of Utah Beach, and it was located west of Carentan at the time of the invasion. It had 46 Beutepanzers, including R35, H39, and B1 bis models, along with a few PzKpfw IIIs. Its most famous action during the Normandy campaign was the counterattack against the US 82nd Airborne Division at the Le Fière bridge from June 6–9. PzAbt206 had 46 Beutepanzers and was located on the Cotentin peninsula. It was destroyed in June 1944 during the fighting on the approaches to Cherbourg. PzAbt205 was transferred from the Pas-de-Calais along with the 84.Infanterie-Division to reinforce the Normandy front, and it too was destroyed in the ensuing fighting.



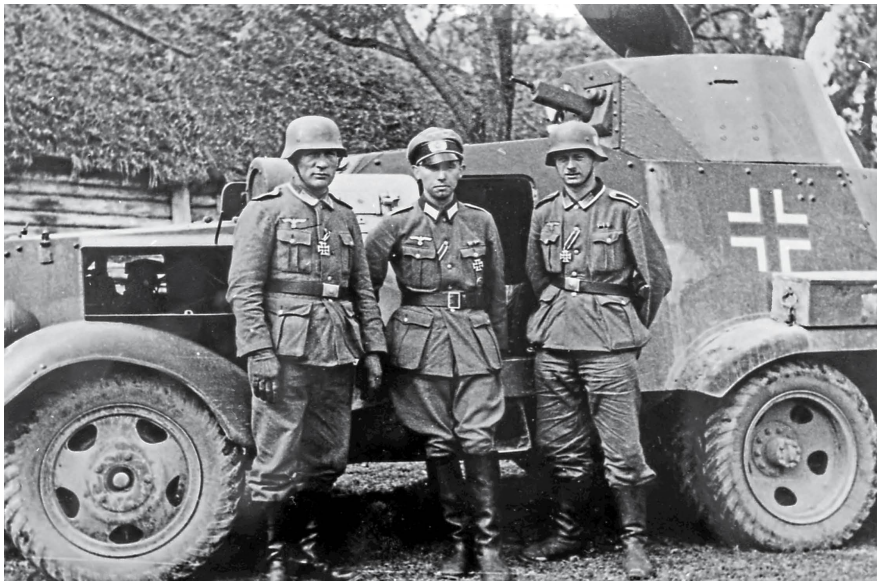
A PzKpfw B2 Flamm of the SS-PanzerAbt.7, 7. SS-Freiwilligen Gebirgs-Division “Prinz Eugen,” in Yugoslavia in 1943. This is the standard conversion, with the Daimler-Benz socket mount for the flamethrower along with the modified superstructure for the flamethrower operator.

The French Beutepanzers became mechanically exhausted by 1944. Due to the windfall of Italian tanks in September 1943 following Italy’s capitulation, many anti-partisan units had their French Beutepanzer tanks replaced with Italian types. Some units switched back to German tanks or had a mixed composition. For example, PzAbt212 on Crete was originally composed entirely of French Beutepanzers. However, by September 1944 it had only 10 Hotchkiss and two Somua tanks in its 2.Kompanie, while its 1.Kompanie had ten PzKpfw IIs, six PzKpfw IIIs, and ten PzKpfw IVs.

Mechanically exhausted Beutepanzers were occasionally deployed as static defenses as part of Atlantikwall strongpoints, like this PzKpfw B2(f) near Dieppe, heavily covered in camouflage netting. It was captured by Canadian troops in September 1944. (LAC PA-143907)

Becker self-propelled gun conversions on French AFVs

As detailed in the section on British tanks below, Hauptmann Alfred Becker converted some British MkVI light tanks into self-propelled howitzers to mechanize his towed artillery battery in 1940–41. The success of this venture was brought to Hitler's attention, and later in 1941 Hptm Becker was authorized to create Baukommando Becker, a small engineering consortium teaming the Alkett plant, Becker's metal-working plant in Krefeld, the Hotchkiss plant in Saint-Denis, and a small team of engineers. This eventually was designated as Bauart Panzerkampfwagen-Instandsetzung-Abteilung Paris (bodenständig).



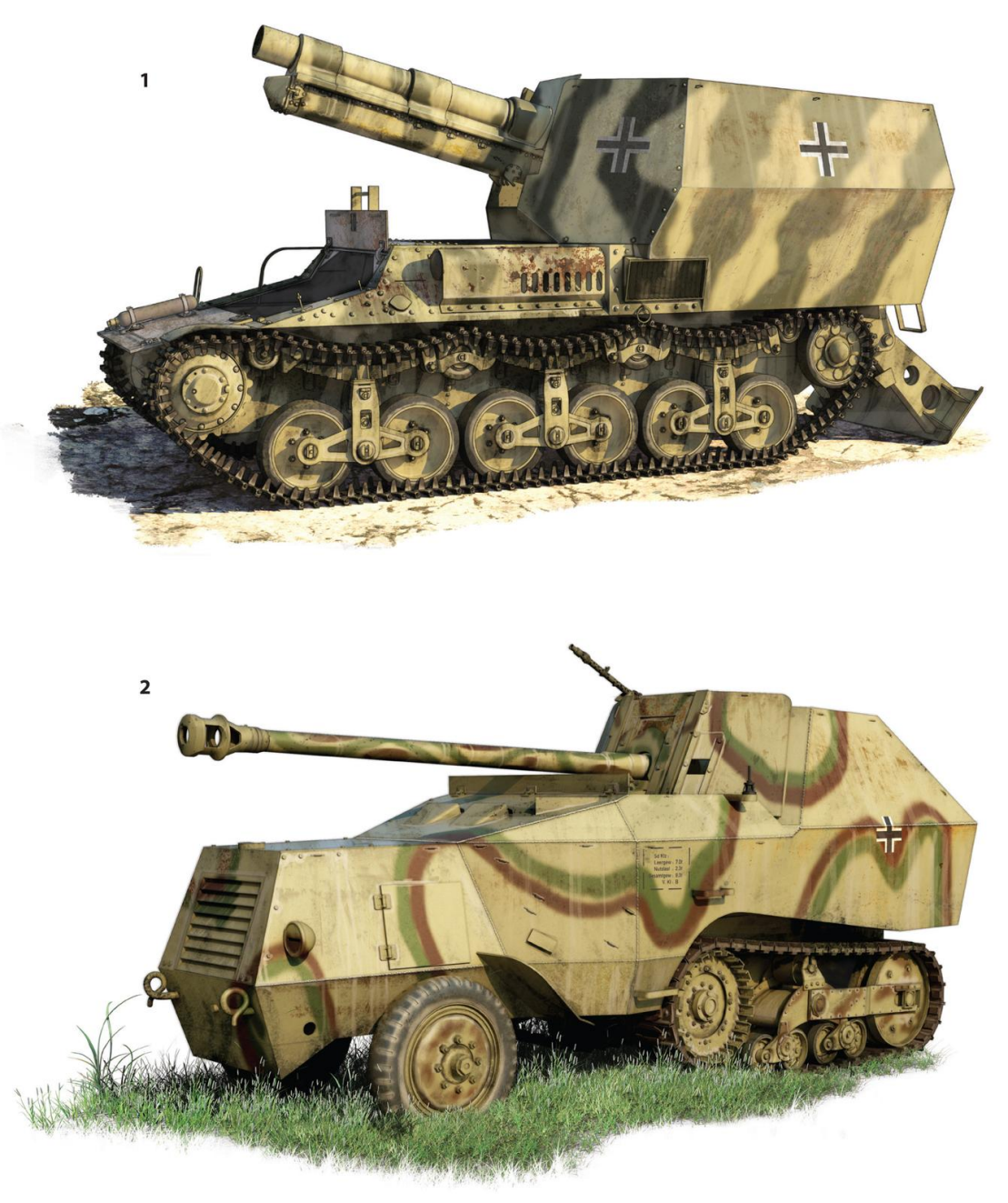
One of the more unusual Beutepanzers in Wehrmacht service was the AAC-1937 (Autoametralladora-cañón Chevrolet modelo 1937), a Spanish type patterned on the Soviet BA-6 armored car. About 70 were built for the Republican army during the Spanish Civil War by the Hispano-Suiza factory in Barcelona, based on a General Motors Peninsular truck chassis. At least 14 made their way to France, where they were briefly used by the French Army in 1940, rearmed as seen here with a French Reibel 7.5mm machine gun. The Wehrmacht captured several of them, and they were used during Operation *Barbarossa*, mainly by police and security units.

Becker's first major effort using a French tracked vehicle chassis was a family of self-propelled guns based on the Chenillette Lorraine 37L. Hitler was shown the prototype of a Becker-designed *Geschützwagen* (gun carriage) fitted with the 10.5cm leFH 18 in May 1942. Based on this display, on May 23, 1942, Hitler ordered armaments minister Albert Speer to convert all available Lorraine Schleppers to self-propelled guns. There were 160 Chenillette Lorraines available, and the initial plan was to convert them all, with 60 fitted with the 10.5cm howitzer, 40 with a 15cm howitzer, and 60 with the 7.5cm anti-tank gun.

Due to an urgent requirement for a 15cm Geschützwagen for the Afrikakorps, these conversions took place first. The first 30 were completed at Alkett's Berlin-Borsigwalde plant in June 1942 and delivered to three divisions of the DAK in July and August 1942. Following this, production shifted to Becker's organization in Paris. The armor for the rear compartment was provided by Alkett and assembly was undertaken at the Hotchkiss plant in Paris. Two armored artillery regiments, GepArtRgt1 (Sfl) and GepArtRgt2, received 64 of the new 15cm Geschützwagen. In December 1943,

GepArtRgt1 was disbanded and its vehicles were dispersed to five static infantry divisions in Normandy. Each of these divisions was supposed to receive a Geschützwagen battery with three vehicles each. By the time of D-Day, the 716.Infanterie-Division (bod.), covering the Operation *Neptune* beaches, had two batteries with a total of six self-propelled howitzers. GepArtRgt2 was also reorganized and its vehicles redistributed to units of 21.Panzer-Division in Normandy. On D-Day, a dozen were attached to PzArtRegt155, while the division's PzGrenRgt155 and PzGrenRgt1192 had six each.

C BECKER CONVERSIONS



1. 15cm sFH 13 auf Geschützwagen Lorraine, 15.Panzer-Division, Afrikakorps, El Alamein, 1942

The original batch of Lorraine Geschützpanzers built at Alkett with Becker's assistance were delivered to the Afrikakorps in 1942. They were finished in the standard tropical scheme of the period, a base color of RAL 8000 *Gelbbraun* (yellow brown), with about one-third of the surface covered with airbrushed bands of RAL 7008 *Graugrün* (khaki). Aside from the Balkan crosses, other tactical markings were seldom used.

2. 7.5cm PaK 40 auf Selbstfahrlafette Somua S307 (f), Panzergrenadier Regiment.125, 21.Panzer Division, Normandy, 1944

Baukommando Becker built a small number of Panzerjägers using the 7.5cm PaK 40 antitank gun and the chassis of the Somua MCG half-track. These were intended as substitutes for the SdKfz 251/22 half-track. They were finished in the usual scheme of RAL 7028 dark yellow, with patches of RAL 6003 olive green and RAL 8017 red-brown, with minimal markings except for a small transport marking on the vehicle side.

The artillery car of armored train Panzerzug 32 carries the single Becker conversion of the Chenillette Lorraine that was armed with a Soviet 122mm M30 howitzer instead of the more common German guns.

The plan to convert 60 Lorraine chassis to carry the 10.5cm leFH 18/4 was never fully realized. The first dozen were converted in September 1942, and within a year a total of 24 were completed. As was the case with the 15cm Geschützwagen, these were first deployed with GepArtRgt1 and 2 until their reorganization in late 1943. At this point, most served with Panzer-Artillerie-Regiment.155 of the 21.Panzer-Division in Normandy. The production run of self-propelled howitzers included a small number of associated radio and observation and command vehicles, the Funk-und Beobachtungswagen auf Lorraine (f) and Funk-und Befehlspanzer auf Lorraine Schlepper (f). A total of over 50 of these command and observation vehicles were planned, but in the event only a handful were completed.

The most common conversion on the Lorraine chassis was its Panzerjäger (tank destroyer), the 7.5cm PaK 40 auf Sf Lorraine, sometimes called the Marder I. This was armed with the 7.5cm PaK 40/1. A total of 184 of these

were assembled at the Hotchkiss plant in Paris and HKB Bielitz at Bielsko-Biala in occupied Poland from June–August 1942.

The Chenillette Renault UE was widely used by the Wehrmacht in a variety of roles including for airfield security. These US Army Air Force troops found this example at a Luftwaffe base in France, armed with an MG 15 machine gun.

Due to the heavy losses endured by Heeresgruppe Mitte (Army Group Center) in the summer 1942 fighting in the Soviet Union, a company of nine Marder I self-propelled guns were issued to six of its infantry divisions (31., 35., 36., 72., 206., and 256.Infanterie-Divisionen), starting in August 1942. The Marder I on the Lorraine chassis received mixed reviews on the Ostfront. Some units appreciated them, since they were more mobile than the towed version of the 7.5cm PaK 40 gun used in conjunction with a half-track prime mover. However, the chassis was not particularly durable and some units found this vehicle to be unsuitable in snow. As a result, no further Ostfront units were issued the Marder I, with the more common versions on the PzKpfw 38(t) subsequently favored.

A 47mm Pak(t) auf PzKpfw 35R(f) of 3./Schnelle-Abt517, Schnelle-Brigade.30, found abandoned by GIs near the Littry oratory on Route D189 on the outskirts of Le Molay-Littry in Lower Normandy. The village was captured by the US 2nd Infantry Division on June 10, 1944. Five of these vehicles served in the battalion's 3.Kompanie, its bicycle-mobile company.

Schnelle-Abteilung 334 of the 334.Infanterie-Division, deployed to Tunisia in early 1943, also received a company of Marder I tank destroyers. This unit fought in the Tunisian campaign, starting in January 1943. The remaining Marder I tank destroyers were issued to units on the Westfront (Western Front) in 1942–43. In most cases, these were used to form a Panzerjäger company in infantry divisions, each with nine to ten Marder I tank destroyers. As of the end of 1943, there were 94 Marder I tank destroyers in service on the Westfront.

Since the supply of Lorraine tractors was exhausted by this program, Becker began the conversion of infantry program, with 12 scheduled to be modified as Geschützwagen with the 105mm leFH.16 light field howitzer and ten with the 7.5cm PaK 40 antitank gun. Only eight of the 10.5cm Geschützwagen auf FCM were built, eventually deployed with StuGAbt200 of the 21.Panzer-Division. These were apparently retired in late 1943, presumably due to the technical exhaustion of the chassis. Only about a hundred FCM 36 tanks had been built for the French program, so this program ended quickly due to a shortage of available chassis.

A much larger number of Hotchkiss H38/39 light tanks were available than the Lorraine tractor, so the effort shifted to this chassis. These were primarily intended for StuGAbt200 of the 21.Panzer- Division in Normandy. An initial batch of 10.5cm Geschützwagen auf Hotchkiss models were delivered in September 1943, and another batch, fitted with either the 10.5cm leFH 16 or 10.5cm leFH 18, were subsequently completed. Some sources indicate that as many as 36 were finished. Besides the self-propelled howitzers, a total of 24 Hotchkiss tanks were converted into a Panzerjäger fitted with the 7.5cm PaK 40 antitank gun.

Baukommando Becker also made numerous conversions to French half-tracks, intended as substitutes for the SdKfz 250 and SdKfz 251 armored half-tracks. The most elaborate of these conversions was the 7.5cm PaK 40 auf mSPW S307(f) that consisted of the usual 7.5cm PaK 40 antitank gun mounted on a Somua MCG half-track. A total of 72 of these were planned, but only 16 were converted. They were used by the Panzergrenadier units of the 21.Panzer-Division in Normandy. The Somua MCG was also used as the basis for a curious multiple mortar vehicle. The *Reihenwerfer* consisted of 20 French 81mm Brandt mortars mounted in a special frame to permit mortar salvoes. The mortar assembly was mounted on the rear of the chassis and the cab was enclosed in armor. A similar mounting was fitted to the Somua MCL/U303(f). These conversions were also deployed with the 21.Panzer-Division.

D BEUTEPANZER ATTACK AT LA FIÈRE BRIDGE

A crucial objective for the US 82nd Airborne Division on D-Day was the small bridge and its associated causeway at La Fière over the Merderet River, west of Sainte-Mère-Église. The Wehrmacht had flooded the farmlands behind Utah Beach, and this bridge was one of the few that offered access to the west. By noon on D-Day, a detachment of paratroopers, primarily from the 505th and 508th Parachute Infantry Regiments, set up defenses on the eastern side of the flooded zone, including two 2.36in. bazooka antitank rocket launchers and at least one 57mm gun. A Kampfgruppe from Grenadier-Regiment.1067 of the 91.Luftlande-Division, spearheaded by tanks of Panzer-Ersatz-und-Ausbildungs-Abteilung.100 (Panzer Replacement and Training Battalion), began to counterattack across the causeway on the afternoon of D-Day. This unit was equipped primarily with French tanks, but had a few PzKpfw III Ausf Gs as well. The paratroopers managed to knock out the lead PzKpfw III, seen here to the side of the road, as well as at least one Renault. Although the first attack was rebuffed, further onslaughts ensued over the next few days due to the importance of the bridge and causeway.

A 7.5cm PaK 40 auf Sf Lorraine lost in Vesoul on September 12, 1944, during the fighting with the US 36th Infantry Division. The town was being defended by Schnelle-Abt602 of the 16.Infanterie-Division, but this Marder I may have come from other LXVI.Korps units retreating through the area at the time.

The smaller Unic P107 half-track was used as the basis for a light armored troop carrier. The first production batch had an open rear fighting compartment while the second batch was enclosed. The Schützenpanzerwagen U304(f) was also built for specialized roles, including a radio-command vehicle, a carrier for the 2cm Flak 36, and for the 3.7cm PaK 36 antitank gun.

The classic Spielberger study of Beutepanzers estimates that Baukommando Becker built about 1,800 armored vehicle conversions. However, more recent research suggests that many of the totals cited by Spielberger were planned conversions that in many cases were not completed. The number of actual conversions is not recorded.

Other self-propelled gun conversions on French AFVs

Since the Renault R35 was not favored for use in Panzer units, it was one of the first French tanks selected for extensive conversion work. In December 1940, it was selected to replace the PzKpfw I as the basis for a Panzerjäger armed with the Czechoslovak 4.7cm anti-tank gun. Conversion work began

in May 1941, and by October 1941 a total of 174 were completed at the Alkett plant.

The Leichter Schutzenpanzerwagen U304(f) was one of the Becker conversions based on the French Unic P107 half-track as a substitute for the SdKfz 250; this one was abandoned in Bruyères in the Vosges region, where it is seen being passed by a patrol of Japanese-American troops of the famous 442nd Infantry Regiment on October 24, 1944.

The artillery manufacturer Rheinmetall-Borsig was assigned to convert Char B1 bis tanks into a self-propelled howitzer to accompany units equipped with the PzKpfw B2 (Flamm). The turret and 75mm gun were removed, and a simple open casemate for the 10.5cm leFH 18/3 light field howitzer was added on top of the roof. Due to the delays in repairing Char B1 bis tanks, the program was delayed until 1942, with only 16 tanks converted. The intended recipient of these guns, Pz.AbtFlamm103, was disbanded in July 1941 due to the mechanical exhaustion of their Char B2 Flammpanzer, so the new Geschützwagen were issued to I./ArtRgt93 of the 26.Panzer-Division. These were replaced by the 10.5cm Wespe (*Wasp*) Geschützwagen in mid-1943. Although there were plans to transfer the 10.5cm Geschützwagen B2 to the 90.Panzergrenadier-Division on Sardinia, it is unclear whether this took place or the vehicles simply retired.

The 8cm sGrW 34 auf PzSpWg AMR35(f) was a Becker conversion of the French AMR 35 cavalry reconnaissance vehicle with a new open superstructure housing an 8cm mortar. One is seen here abandoned at the Plzeń-Bory airfield in Czechoslovakia in 1945. Behind it is a rare example of the AMR 35 Type Colonies ZT 4, intended for French colonial service in Indochina but incomplete when captured in 1940.

There were numerous other conversions of French Beutepanzer types, though these were often local improvisations. For example, the widely used Renault UE armored tractor was reconfigured with an enlarged fighting compartment with a machine gun to make it more suitable for security duties. Some were also modified to carry various larger weapons, including the 3.7cm PaK 36 antitank gun.

The Beutepanzer Division

The only Panzer division to be based on French Beutepanzers was the 21.Panzer-Division (neu), reconstituted in France in the latter half of 1943. This division can be traced back to French Beutepanzer units that had been formed earlier in France. In January 1943, two Beutepanzer battalions, PzAbt223 and PzErsAbt100, had been consolidated as Panzer-Regiment 100 at Satory near Paris. Schnelle Brigade West had been formed in Rennes on March 12, 1943, consisting of PzGrenRgt.433, ArtRgt.931 (gep.), as well as an assault gun battalion and two bicycle infantry companies.

After the original 21.Panzer-Division was destroyed in Tunisia in May 1943, the OKH ordered the reconstruction of the division starting on July 15, 1943, based on these two Beutepanzer regiments. Its new KStN (*Kriegsstärkenachweisungen*: War establishment strength) was unique.

Panzer-Regiment.100 was organized around two Panzer battalions, each with an S35 medium tank company and three companies of H38 light tanks. On paper, the regiment had 56 Somua S35s, 133 Hotchkiss H39s, and 30 Char B1 bis. StuGAbt200 had four companies, each with four 10.5cm leFH 18 Geschützwagen auf Hotchkiss and six 7.5cm PaK 40 auf Hotchkiss models. Panzer-Artillerie-Regiment.155 consisted of three battalions with a mixed composition of towed guns and Lorraine self-propelled howitzers. It had four companies with a total of 24 10.5cm leFH 18 auf Lorraines, two companies with a total of 12 15cm sFH 13 auf Lorraines, and one company with two 8cm Raketenwerfer auf Somua MCLs.

The 15cm sFH13/1 (Sf) auf Geschützwagen auf Lorraine (f) was initially built by Baukommando Becker for the Afrikakorps. This example was captured in North Africa and was subsequently displayed at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, for many years.

The Marder I 7.5cm PaK 40/1 auf Geschützwagen Lorraine Schlepper (f) was one of the earlier Becker conversions of war-booty French armored vehicles, undertaken in the summer of 1942. About 40 served in the static infantry divisions' Panzerjäger companies in Normandy in 1944. This one, named Löwe (Lion), is seen in a US Army holding area south of Trévières in the late summer of 1944 and was probably from either the 709. or 716.Infanterie-Division. The turretless tank to the left is a Renault R-35 chassis that had been used as a 4.7cm Panzerjäger conversion.

The new element of the division was a pair of mechanized infantry regiments, Panzergrenadier-Regiment.125 and Pz.Gren-Rgt.192. These regiments each had a motorized and a mechanized battalion, the latter equipped with Becker-converted armored half-tracks based on French chassis. The division had some novelties based on the available Becker contraptions. For example, the unusual schwerer Reihenwerfer auf Somua MCL (f) multiple mortar vehicles were deployed on a scale of one per Panzergrenadier battalion, plus four in StuGAbt200. The inventory of the division changed constantly due to the poor mechanical state of the Beutepanzers. For example, the Becker conversions on the FCM infantry tank that had been incorporated into StuGAbt200 were retired in December 1943 due to their mechanical exhaustion.

The divisional commander, Oberst Edgar Feuchtinger, was well aware that the French tanks in the Panzer regiment were obsolete. As a result, he tried to persuade the OKH to provide more modern tanks. From the autumn of 1943 until early 1944, the division received about a hundred PzKpfw IV Ausf H tanks as well as a handful of old PzKpfw IV Ausf C/Ds with the short 7.5cm gun. The division's tank regiment was redesignated as PzRgt22 in May 1944. At the time of the Normandy landings, the I./PzRgt22 had 78 PzKpfw IVs

plus a handful of PzKpWg III command tanks. The II./PzRgt22 had 26 PzKpfw IVs, 38 Somua S35s, and two Hotchkiss H39s; the old PzKpfw IV Ausf C/Ds were concentrated in 8./PzRgt22. As a result of the supply of the PzKpfw IV tanks, PzRgt22's inventory of Beutepanzers was heavily diluted, though the Beutepanzer strength remained predominant in the Panzergrenadier, StuG, and artillery units. This unit was the first Panzer division to counterattack the Operation *Neptune* landings in Normandy, initially committed against British units in the Sword Beach area on June 6, 1944.

An 8cm Leichter Reihenwerfer S307 (f) auf SOMUA MCL of the 21.Panzer-Division, knocked out in Normandy in July 1944. This was equipped with 20 Brandt 81mm mortar tubes, designed to fire in salvo fashion.

Among the Becker conversions was the 7.5cm PaK 40 auf mSPW S307(f) based on war-booty French Somua half-tracks. These were deployed in the two Panzergrenadier regiments of the 21.Panzer-Division, with four per battalion for a total of 16 in the division. This particular example has had one of its front armor panels blown off during combat.

BRITISH TANKS AND AFVS

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France and Belgium and the British 1st Armoured Division lost 691 tanks during the fighting in France and Belgium in 1940, consisting of 407 MkVI light tanks, 158 cruiser tanks, and 126 Matilda infantry tanks. Most of the tanks had suffered serious combat damage or had been scuttled by their crews, leaving very modest numbers in serviceable condition. Although some British tanks were collected at the Gien depot in France, there was no dedicated effort to utilize these tanks on a regular basis. One of the few exceptions was the use of nine A13 cruiser tanks by Panzer-Abteilung (Flamm) 100 at the start of Operation *Barbarossa* in June 1941. All these tanks broke down within three weeks, a clear indication of the difficulty of exploiting captured tanks when the supply of spare parts was not available. At least one Matilda II was converted into an improvised self-propelled gun.

One of the two AEC Dorchester armored command vehicles that was captured in April 1941 and used by Rommel's AOK Afrika headquarters. Seen here on September 14, 1941, Rommel is on the roof along with two of his Italian Army liaison officers.

Hauptmann Alfred Becker served in 15./Artillerie-Regiment.227 of the 227.Infanterie-Division during the campaigns in France and Belgium. Becker had run a small industrial firm before the war in the Krefeld area. Noting the numerous British tanks that had been abandoned, he came up with the idea of using the chassis of the MkVI light tank as the basis for a self-propelled gun armed with the leFH 16 10.5cm howitzers used by his battery. The division had been raised in the Krefeld area and had numerous metalworkers in its ranks. Using this talent pool, Becker converted a single chassis and received permission to create an entire company of 12 plus six of the regiment's 15cm sFHs. Armor plate for the new rear superstructure came from his personal

connections at the Deutsche Edelstahlwerke Gmbh in Krefeld. These were dubbed the Geschützwagen MkVI 736 (e) and six were completed prior to the commitment of this division to Operation *Barbarossa* in June 1941. Becker was awarded the German Cross in Gold for his initiative. These self-propelled guns proved very effective in the fighting outside Leningrad, but they gradually broke down due to the lack of spare parts. Becker's idea had attracted the attention of the Heereswaffenamt, and in 1942 he was recalled to Germany to help Alkett develop a Panzerjäger based on captured French Chenillette Lorraine armored tractors. This is covered in more detail in the French section above.

Subsequent use of British Beutepanzers was largely on an impromptu basis. During the fighting in North Africa, the Deutsches Afrikakorps (DAK) captured British tanks in small numbers on numerous occasions and put them back in service when possible. For example, following Operation *Battleaxe* in Libya in June 1941, the 15.Panzer-Division recovered seven Matilda II infantry tanks while other units secured eight more. These gradually broke down, but four were still operational in November 1941 at the start of Operation *Crusader*.

One of the best-known examples of a British Beutepanzers in Afrikakorps service was the AEC Dorchester armored command vehicle. On the night of April 6, 1941, a senior British headquarters convoy including LtGen Philip Neame and LtGen Richard O'Connor were captured by an Afrikakorps patrol, including some AEC Dorchester armored command vehicles. These spacious vehicles, dubbed "Mammut" (Mammoth) in German service, were an ideal command vehicle. Rommel took over two of these for his own headquarters and they were renamed "Max" and "Moritz" after the characters of a popular 1865 children's book. They were used up to the end of the campaign in Tunisia in 1943.

During the May–June 1941 tank battles, the Afrikakorps captured several Matilda II infantry tanks in working order. Seven of these were put into service with Panzer-Regiment-8 of the 15.Panzer-Division.

Shortages of German tanks encouraged the DAK to utilize Beutepanzers, and in February 1942 a Beutepanzer-Abteilung was formed in Benghazi that included a company of Stuarts and a company of MkVI light tanks. This unit was subsequently called the PzAbt zbV (*zur besonderen Verwendung:* special purpose) and attached to the *Kampfstaffel* (combat force) that protected the AOK Afrika, Rommel's DAK headquarters. Companies from this unit were used in combat between the spring and autumn of 1942, with a varying assortment of Beutepanzers depending on whatever was available.

The Wehrmacht captured small numbers of British tanks during several campaigns, including Greece and Crete in 1941, the Dieppe raid in 1942, and in Northwest Europe in 1944–45. Some of these saw short-term use.

SOVIET TANKS AND AFVS

At the start of Operation *Barbarossa* on June 22, 1941, the Red Army had over 25,000 tanks, more than the rest of the world combined. This was the largest tank force of any army at any point during World War II. However, these numbers were deceptive as a large proportion of Soviet tanks were in a poor mechanical state due to their age and a tendency to favor new tank production over an adequate supply of spare parts. The Red Army categorized tank readiness in five categories, 1–5, with Category 1 being new and Category 5 being retired for scrapping. In the western military districts that bore the brunt of the 1941 fighting, there were 12,782 tanks, of which 2,157 (16.8 percent) were new (Category 1), 8,383 (65.6 per cent) were operational with minor maintenance issues (Category 2), and the rest (17.6 percent) needed medium maintenance or capital rebuilding. Tanks farther inside the Soviet Union were in poorer shape. Even though the bulk of the older tanks in Category 2 were nominally ready for action, many were mechanically exhausted with excessive engine hours. Furthermore, spare parts were often lacking, meaning that even minor shortcomings such as damaged tracks left the tanks inoperable or prone to rapid breakdown. On average, Soviet tanks had already accumulated about half their engine time on the eve of the war, making them very susceptible to breakdown after long road marches to the battle zone.

The poor mechanical state of the Soviet tank fleet, in combination with poor leadership and inadequate training, led to the “Great Tank Massacre,” as it has been dubbed by recent Russian historians. By the end of 1941, the Red Army had lost 23,200 tanks. At least half of these had broken down due to lack of fuel or mechanical problems. Many were abandoned with minimal damage during the great encirclement battles of 1941. In spite of this, the Wehrmacht made very little use of Soviet tanks captured in 1941.

Captured Soviet tanks were frequently used by training units to acquaint infantry with antitank tactics. This T-34, manufactured in April 1941, was captured by the US Army in France in 1944. It has various German additions, including extra stowage bins.

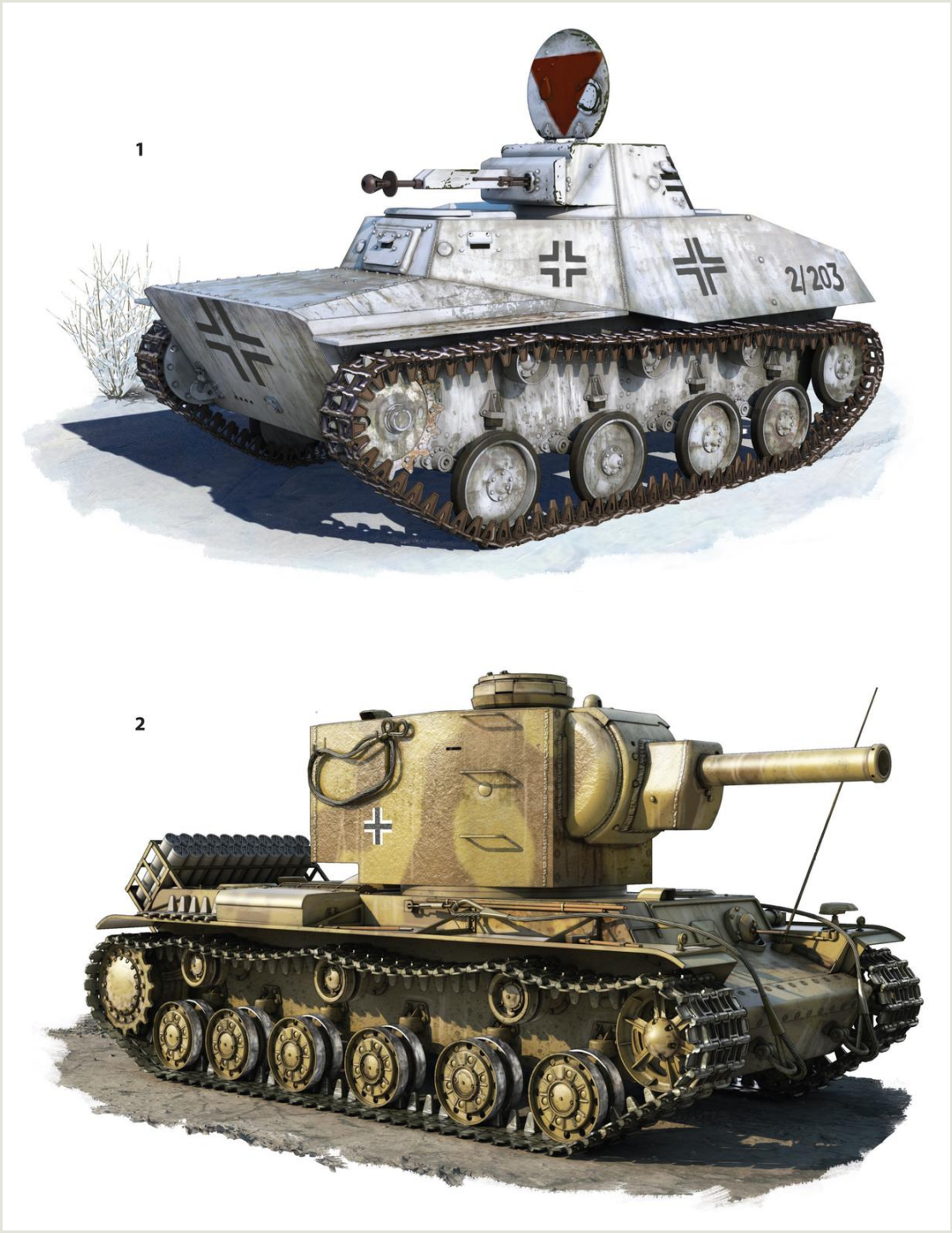
Prior to the start of the campaign, the OKH ordered the formation of four special Panzer salvage units attached to each of the field army supply commands (*Oberfeldzeugstäbe*): ObPzStab Nord, Mitte, Süd, and Rumänien. In addition, the security divisions (Sicherungs-Divisionen) were instructed to create Beutepanzer companies for rear area security. In practice, the improvised salvage units proved completely incapable of recovering any significant number of Soviet tanks. GenMaj Reinhardt's postwar report on utilization of captured equipment described the problems:

> The salvage platoons were inadequately provided with equipment. Even in good weather, the German heavy tank transporter trailers were hardly useable for cross-country purposes. Towing was essentially impossible during the muddy period [in the autumn] and during winter. The transport of equipment, even to the next railroad station, involved unspeakable difficulties. It was often useless if no railroad cars could be supplied for further transport. As a result, the salvage platoons primarily occupied themselves in salvaging German tanks and only occasionally collected a captured [Soviet] tank. Badly damaged enemy tanks were left where they were found. The combat units occasionally took along captured tanks that were still drivable or quick to repair. Once they broke down due to mechanical problems that could not be repaired without spare parts, they were either abandoned or blown up. Systematic salvage of captured Russian tanks never took place on the Eastern Front.

Soviet armored cars such as the BA-20/PzSpWg202(r) were widely used for rear-area security. This example was modified by replacing the Soviet ball-mounted DT turret machine gun with an MG 34 in an open mount with a flap. It was assigned to SS-Kreigsberichter Homann, a war correspondent on assignment to the headquarters of SS-Freiwilligen-Division "Prinz Eugen" during anti-partisan operations in Yugoslavia in 1942.

In November 1941, the OKH estimated that only about a hundred Soviet tanks had been put to use by security units or were awaiting repair. Another German report was even more pessimistic, indicating that through all of 1941, only 16 T-26 and 15 BT tanks had been recovered, repaired, and issued to security units. This probably underestimates the use of Soviet tanks, since there were numerous instances of units using captured tanks, if even for only a few days. In most cases, there was no reporting to higher authorities about these informal activities, so it is difficult to make any precise accounts of the extent of use of Soviet tanks by Wehrmacht units.

E SOVIET BEUTEPANZER



1. PzKpfw 733 (r) (T-30), 2./Panzer-Regiment 203, Leningrad Front, 1942

Panzer-Regiment-203 was formed using French Beutepanzers in the summer of 1941 and shipped to Heeresgruppe Nord around Leningrad. It occasionally made use of captured Soviet tanks due to frequent breakdowns of its French tanks. In this case, this early-production T-30 has been given a coat of whitewash over the usual Soviet 4BO camouflage green. It was prominently marked with black Balkan crosses. Beutepanzers usually had more prominent national insignia than standard German Panzers to prevent needless fratricide.

2. PzKpfw KV-2 754(r), Panzer-Abt. Z.b.V.66, Operation *Herkules*, May 1942

Panzer-Abteilung Z.b.V66 was equipped with a number of captured Soviet tanks for the planned operation to seize Malta. Its KV-2 was refurbished, receiving a standard German Panzer cupola for the commander. On the rear, a rack was added to carry additional ammunition in the usual black tubes. These vehicles were painted in the tropical finish of two-thirds RAL 8000 *Gelbbraun* (yellow brown) and one-third RAL 7008 *Graugrün* (khaki).

The Riga arsenal in Latvia was used by Heeresgruppe Nord for collecting and repairing Soviet Beutepanzers. It eventually became the primary Beutepanzer depot on the Ostfront, called the Panzerkampfwagen-Instandsetzung-Kraftwerk Nord. By February 1942, the depot had enough experience in rehabilitating Soviet tanks to make an assessment. They concluded that:

> The design of Russian tanks, especially the BT, is hopelessly bad. In no case will modifications to improve the design be worthwhile. Rebuilding, even when carefully done, is not satisfactory because sub-assemblies have to be cannibalized from other Beutepanzer and so old and new parts are often intermixed… [A Panzer specialist of 16.Armee concluded that] it was impossible to employ them, even on a temporary basis.

A recent Russian study concluded that the Germans recovered between 1,285 and 1,695 tanks from 1941–42, the majority of which were light tanks, including the T-26 infantry tank (900–1,100) and BT cavalry tank (300–500). A report by Heeresgruppe Nord based on the Riga experience concluded that the T-26 suffered from a deficient transmission due to an undersized clutch plate; unreliable steering due to overheating of the brake bands; excessive engine seizures due to the oil breaking down at high temperatures; and weak tracks due to poor track pin retention. The BT-5 and BT-7 suffered from the usual problem of Christie tanks, a tractor transmission that mated poorly with an excessively powerful engine. In addition, the BT series suffered the same sorts of problems as the T-26 in terms of poor materials, electrical system failures, fuel system interruptions, and oil line ruptures. The report concluded: “The Russian Beutepanzer can’t be used in large numbers in a unit.” It suggested that a better use would be to use them as “a mobile bunker,” with little hope of employing them as normal tanks. As a result of the low potential of the Soviet Beutepanzers, most of these were used on an impromptu basis by infantry and security divisions.

Through the winter of 1941–42, the possibility of recovering additional tanks diminished because tanks were often pillaged for parts, both by German troops and Soviet civilians. Rehabilitation of the tanks was pointless without spare parts. The Wehrmacht only captured a single major Soviet tank plant in 1941, the Kharkov Locomotive Plant (KhPZ: Kharkovsky parovozostroitelny zavod imeni Kominterna No. 183) that had been the primary manufacturer for the T-34. However, the machinery of this plant had been relocated to Nizhni-Tagil in the Urals in 1941 prior to its capture, so the Wehrmacht only found a hollow shell when it fell into their hands.

A pair of PzKpfw T-34 747(r)s of SS-PzRgt3, 3.SS-Panzer-Division “Totenkopf,” on September 25, 1942, shortly before the division was sent back to France for refitting after its heavy combat losses earlier in the year. Both of these are 1941 production T-34 tanks.

Remaining Soviet tanks that had been left on the battlefield through the winter of 1941–42 were gradually recovered for shipment back to Germany for their scrap value, since armor steel was perpetually in short supply. Although Panzer divisions made only occasional use of a few Soviet Beutepanzers, infantry divisions showed more enthusiasm for their employment. German infantry divisions had no organic tank unit, so a few Soviet Beutepanzers provided an immediate source of tank support. The problem with the small-scale use of Soviet Beutepanzers was that spare parts were an inescapable problem, as the Wehrmacht never established a viable system for Soviet Beutepanzer repair during the early years of the war on the Eastern Front. This began to change in 1943 due to continual shortages of German tanks. Most often, existing Panzer repair depots were given the added responsibility of repairing Beutepanzers.

A PzKpfw T-34 747(r) of Panzer-Regiment Großdeutschland, Panzer-Grenadier-Division "Großdeutschland," in the winter of 1943 with an SdKfz 252 in the foreground.

For example, the Waffen-SS had set up a Panzerwerk in the KhPZ tank plant in Kharkov in early 1943. This plant served as the assembly point for numerous T-34 tanks that had been captured in the Kharkov region during the previous months' fighting. This facility, dubbed the SS T-34-Inst. Tübeke, delivered 25 refurbished T-34s to the SS-PzGrenDiv "Das Reich" in May 1943, enough to create an added third battalion. These took part in the Kursk battles that summer. Even as late as August 1943, there were still 21 functional T-34 tanks in the unit. During the summer 1943 battles around Kursk, there were only about 50 Soviet tanks in all the Panzer divisions, the majority with "Das Reich."

One of the more common uses of captured Soviet tanks in 1945 was as recovery vehicles. There were at least 30 T-34 tanks in use as recovery vehicles in the early months of the last year of the war.

One of the few specialized uses of Soviet Beutepanzers was the creation of PzAbt z.b.V.66 in May 1942 to form a Panzer assault force for Operation *Herkules*, a planned assault of Malta. This unit was equipped with refurbished KV and T-34 tanks, though in reality only one company was actually formed. In the event, *Herkules* was canceled and the unit was sent to Heeresgruppe Mitte in the summer of 1942. This company was attached to the Ski-Jäger-Brigade, later enlarged to the 1.Ski-Jäger-Division. This was one of the few divisions on the Ostfront with a significant number of Soviet

tanks: 21 T-34s in 1943; 22 T-34s plus two turretless recovery T-34s in January 1944; 28 T-34s at the end of 1944; and 11 T-34s in April 1945.

On rare occasions, Soviet Beutepanzers were used for conversion to self-propelled guns. The small T-20 Komomsolets artillery tractor was occasionally used as an improvised carrier for the 3.7cm PaK 36 antitank gun. In January 1943, Panzerjäger-Abteilung 563 was upgraded to a self-propelled organization. To motorize some of their towed 7.5cm PaK 97/38 antitank guns, ten were mounted on T-26 chassis and issued as self-propelled guns to the battalion's 3.Kompanie. In the summer of 1944, schwere PzAbt653 removed the turret from a captured T-34 and used it to mount a 2cm Flakvierling 38 within an improvised shield. These conversions were exceptions to the rule, since most Panzer formations lacked confidence in the durability of captured Soviet tanks.

A PzKpfw T-34 747(r) of III./SS-Panzer-Regiment2, SS-Panzer-Division "Das Reich," during the Kursk fighting in the summer of 1943. This is one of about two dozen T-34 tanks that were rebuilt by the SS T-34-Instandsetzungsbetrieb Tübke at the Kharkov Locomotive Plant in April 1943. It has a PzKpfw III or PzKpfw IV turret bin added at the rear of the turret for crew stowage.

Soviet tank turrets were occasionally used as the basis for strongpoints. This was on a much smaller scale than was the case with French tank turrets, largely due to the lack of a fortification effort on the Ostfront comparable to the enormous Atlantic Wall program. The chart below shows the major types. Besides these standardized designs, older Soviet tanks such as the T-26 and

BT-7 were often used as static pillboxes, with the hulls buried in the ground and only the turret above the surface.

Soviet tank turret Ringstand		
Tank	**Bauform**	**Quantity (1945)**
T-70	243	13
T-34	248	23
KV-1	251	10

In May 1943, the Heer had 822 Beutepanzers in service in all theaters, of which only 126 were Soviet; of these, 41 were derelict in repair depots. In July 1943, the OKH attempted to improve the exploitation of captured Soviet tanks. To encourage infantry units to turn in operational T-34 tanks, each infantry division would be rewarded with two 7.5cm PaK 40 antitank guns with prime mover for every T-34 turned in; Panzer units would receive two self-propelled guns or three Maultier half-track supply vehicles. In the case of non-functional T-34s, a reward of 40 bottles of vodka was offered for any intact T-34, six bottles for key components such as engines, gun sights or radios, and between one and three bottles for other parts including guns, radiators, and engine starters. KV heavy tanks were also collected, mainly for their value as turretless recovery vehicles.

F T-34 IN GERMAN SERVICE

1. PzKpfw T-34 747 (r), Panzer-Regiment 35, 4.Panzer-Division, Soviet Union, 1943
Panzer divisions occasionally made use of captured T-34s, so long as they could be kept operating with available spare parts. This is an example of at least two T-34 tanks used by Panzer-Regiment.35, carrying the unit's distinctive Berlin Bear insignia on the

turret front. They were apparently finished in the usual overall dark yellow RAL 7028, with patches of RAL 6003 olive green and RAL 8017 red-brown.

2. PzKpfw T-34 747 (r), III./SS-Panzer-Regiment.2,SS-Pz.Gren.Div. “Das Reich”

The SS T-34-Inst Tübeke at the Kharkov Locomotive Plant delivered 25 refurbished T-34s to the SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Division “Das Reich” in May 1943. These were used to form a third battalion in the unit’s Panzer regiment, manned from Panzerjäger crews. SS-Hauptscharführer Emil Seibold from this unit was credited with 69 kills during the war, including some scored from June–August 1944 with one of these T-34s. They were apparently finished in the usual overall dark yellow RAL 7028, with patches of RAL 6003 olive green and RAL 8017 red-brown, though locally available paint may have been used.

This KV-2/PzKpfw KW2 754(r) was emplaced at the Krupp plant in Essen, Germany, for local defense and captured by US troops in April 1945.

The fighting in 1944 severely disrupted the Beutepanzer recovery efforts, the Riga Panzer depot becoming isolated in the Kurland pocket by the Red Army summer offensive and it being cut off completely in October 1944. Once Heeresgruppe Nord (later HG Kurland) became cut off from the rest of the Wehrmacht in the autumn of 1944, Beutepanzers became even more valuable inside the Kurland pocket. The Riga depot continued to refurbish Beutepanzers and provide them to units in the area. The fighting for the Kurland pocket led to some of the most extensive use of Soviet Beutepanzers in 1944 and 1945. However, even this was of fairly small scale, with only 19 Beutepanzers in use in April 1945 of the 435 Panzer and StuG assault guns in the pocket.

The isolation of the Riga depot led to the establishment of another Beutepanzer depot at the Waggon- und Maschinenbau A.-G (WUMAN) plant in Görlitz in eastern Germany. This continued to refurbish Beutepanzers with the assistance of Alkett and Daimler-Benz until the plant was overrun by the Red Army in the spring of 1945.

A Semovente M42 75/18/StuG M42 mit 75/18 850 (i) named Marga 3 of the Panzerabwehr-Abteilung 171, 71.Infanterie-Division, knocked out in a garage in the Santa Maria area on May 15, 1944.

ITALIAN TANKS AND AFVS

Italy surrendered to the Allies on September 8, 1943. The Wehrmacht had anticipated the Italian switch and immediately surrounded and disarmed Italian army units in Italy as well as those on occupation duty in the Balkans and southern France. A rump fascist state, the Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI), was established in northern Italy with its own small army, the Esercito Nazionale Repubblicano (ENR).

The Wehrmacht inherited a significant amount of Italian tanks and armored vehicles and began reinforcing units in Italy and the Balkans with these Beutepanzers. This came at an opportune time, as by late 1943 many of the French Beutepanzers in use by security and police units were mechanically exhausted.

Besides the captured tanks, the principal Italian manufacturer, Fiat-Ansaldo, as well as major subcomponent manufacturers, were located in northern Italy, which was still held by German forces. This included Ansaldo-Fossati in Genoa-Sestri, Fiat-SPA in Turin, Lancia in Milan, and Breda in Milan. Besides the production plants, the largest Italian repair depot, the O.A.R.E. was in Bologna. As a result of these industrial resources, Germany planned to continue Italian tank and AFV production both for German and Italian ENR use. As a result of the 1943 windfall and the exhaustion of French Beutepanzers, Italian tanks and AFVs became the predominant types of Beutepanzers in late 1944 and 1945. For example, in April 1945, about half of all Beutepanzer/Beute StuGs in German service were Italian types.

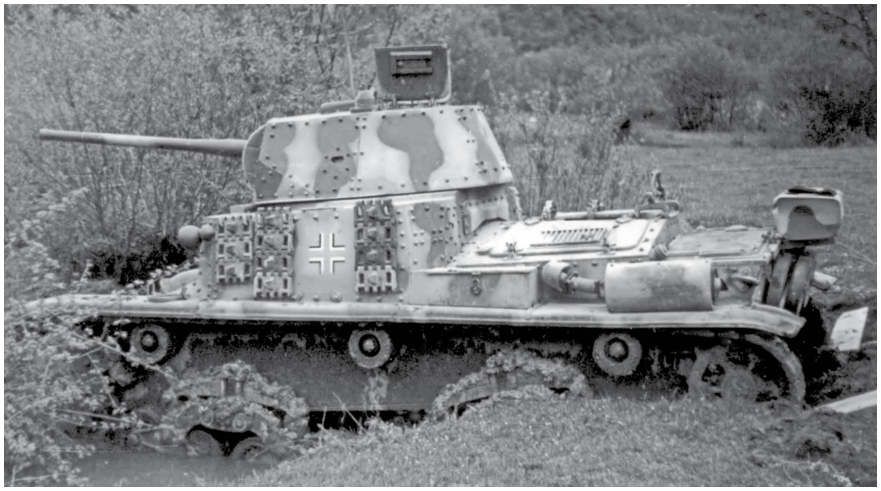
A Sturmgeschütz M42 75/18 850(i) being operated by Luftwaffe troops of Kampfgruppe Schmid, formed from Division “General Göring” in Tunisia in 1943.

Of the captured Italian tanks, the L3 tankettes were widely regarded as obsolete and too small to be useful. Some remained in use in Yugoslavia with Italian crews for anti-partisan operations and others were handed over to Croatian units. The only major German unit to use the tankettes was PzAbt Adria, attached to Heeresgruppe C. Likewise, the L6 light tank was mainly retained for security duties and anti-partisan operations.

The current version of the Italian medium tank family, the M15/43, was mainly used to re-equip small Panzer formations in the Balkans that previously had been equipped with French Beutepanzers. This included PzAbt zbV12 and PzAbt202. The Italian tanks were also provided to police units. The M15/43 was still adequate in secondary roles, but its 47mm gun was not up to contemporary standards, nor was its armor. By late 1944, these units began to encounter Soviet tanks as the Red Army advanced into the Balkans. PzAbt202 had the misfortune of encountering Red Army tank units in the late autumn and winter of 1944 in Yugoslavia. By way of example, during the fighting in Belgrade, one PzKpfw M15 was rammed and flipped over by a Soviet T-34.

A PzKpfw M41 738(i) that was assigned to the 1.Gendarmerie-Bataillon (mot.) in Warsaw. It was knocked out during fighting with Polish insurgents near the intersection of Ulica Pius X and Ulica Mokotowska during the August 1944 Warsaw Uprising. At least three Italian Beutepanzers took part in the Warsaw fighting.

The best Italian tank was the P40, which was only entering service at the time of the Italian surrender. Although classified as a heavy tank, it was roughly comparable to the PzKpfw IV and armed with a 75mm gun. Serial production began in 1944, but of the 99 built in that year, 38 lacked their engines. The original plan was to deploy the P40 in four Panzerartillerie Regimenten, but instead, they were delivered to a mixture of units. In October 1943, the five prototypes were deployed with the Panzer-Ausbildungs-Abteilung Süd training unit. In April 1944, five or six were delivered to the Panzer-Abteilung Adria. The single largest operator of the P40 was the 24.Waffen-SS-Gebirgs-Brigade “Karstjäger.” This unit received 20–22 tanks in October 1944. It fought against Italian partisans in northern Italy and in neighboring Yugoslavia against Tito’s partisans. It also fought British forces near the Tarvisio Pass in early May 1945, losing two P40s.

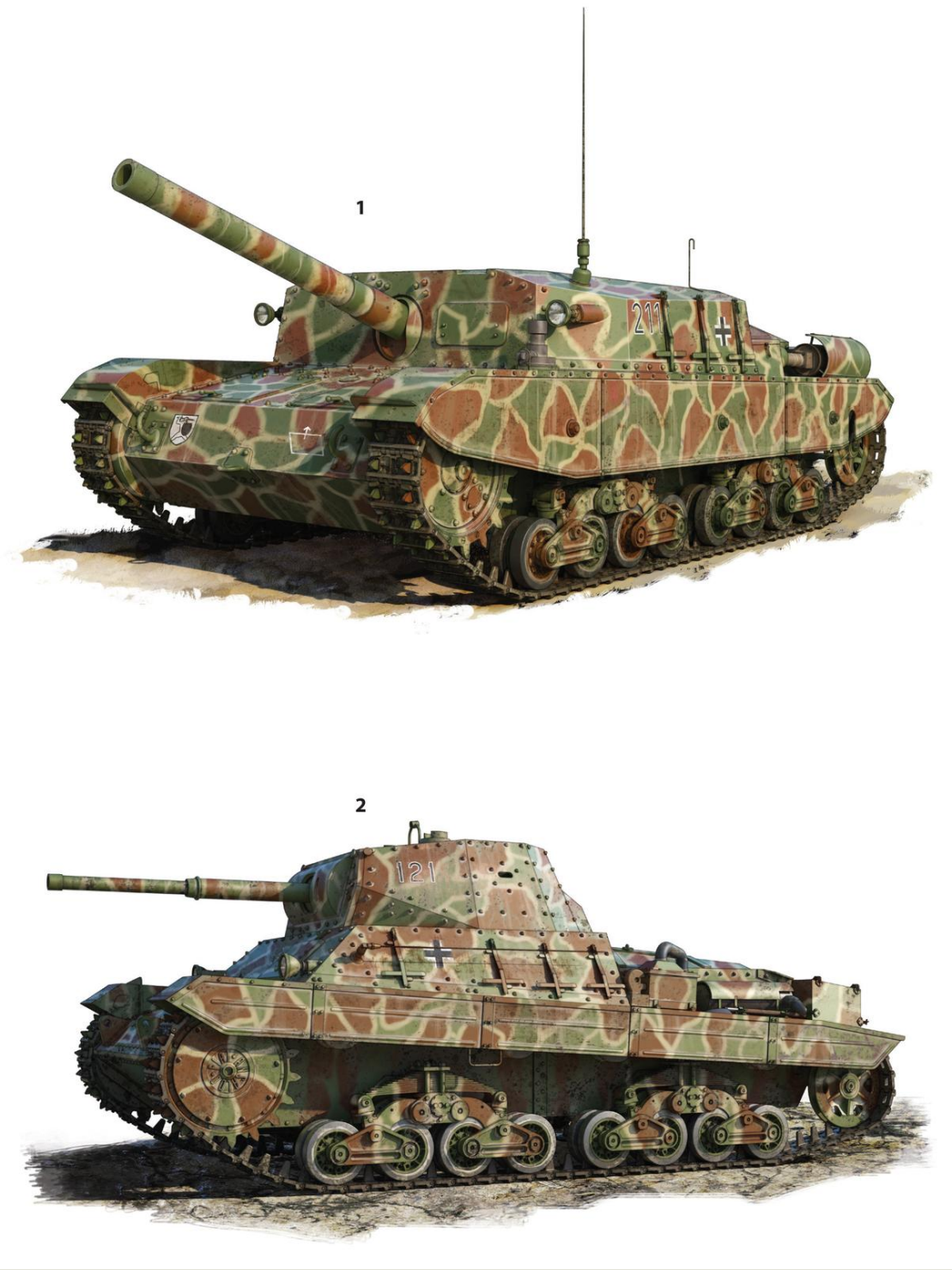


A PzKpfw M42 738(i) of PzAbt202 that became bogged down during an anti-partisan operation in Croatia in the summer of 1944. This unit had previously been equipped with French Beutepanzers, but was re-equipped with Italian types in 1944.

In mid-November 1944, 13 P40 tanks were delivered to the 15.Polizei-Panzer-Kompanie, which used the tanks in northwest Italy for security duties. The company surrendered to the Italian partisans at the end of the war and abandoned its tanks in Novara. In December 1944, 15 P40 tanks were deployed with the 10.Polizei-Panzer-Kompanie. The unit was assigned to patrol the important area around Verona, and at the end of April 1945 it moved to Bolzano (Bozen), near the Austrian border, where it later surrendered to the US Army. The only use of the P40 by Italian forces was with the ENR, which used three of them in the Milan area.

Due to the problem with engine supply, the Wehrmacht planned to recycle some P40s as static strongpoints for the Voralpen-Stellung defense line in the foothills of the Italian Alps. A standardized bunker design, Bauform FPzFT 4814, was developed and 100 additional P40 turrets were ordered, of which 46 had been completed by the end of February 1945. These fortification turrets were armed with the German 7.5cm KwK 37 L/24, as used on the early PzKpfw IV, rather than the Italian gun that was no longer available. Deployment plans changed and the first of these turret fortifications were prepared for shipment to three fortified sectors: Genoa on the northern Italian coast, Schichau on the Baltic (now Elbląg, Poland), and Pardubice along the river Elbe in the occupied Czech provinces. In the event, only one Panzer bunker is known to have been completed, at the Hillersleben proving ground.

G ITALIAN BEUTEPANZER



1. StuG 853 (i) (Semovente M43 da 105/25), Heeres-StuG-Brigade 914, Italy, 1944

The Semovente M43 da 105/25 was originally issued in small numbers to the Panzerjäger-Abteilung of 356.Infanterie-Division, the Reichsgrenadier-Division Hoch und Deutschmeister, 26.Panzer-Division, and PzAusbAbtSüd. The modest holdings in these units were consolidated together in StuG-Brigade 914, starting in late 1943. This unit suffered heavy losses in the first half of 1944. These vehicles were factory-finished in the standard late war Italian three-color scheme of *giallo sabia scuro*, *marrone rossiccio*, and *verde scuro* (sand gray, red-brown, and dark green). The dark green and red-brown were the predominant colors, with a thin outline of sand separating them.

2. PzKpfw P40 737 (i), SS-Panzerkompanie.24, 24.Waffen-SS-Gebirgs-Brigade "Karstjäger," Austria, 1945

The Karstjäger Brigade was the only German unit to receive the new P40 heavy tank in any significant numbers. They were finished in the usual late-war Italian scheme of dark green and red-brown, with the splotches separated by a thin boundary of a desaturated sand gray. Markings were simple, consisting of the tank tactical number on the turret and the Balkan cross on the hull side.

Italian tanks and AFVs in German hands and new production				
Tanks	**Inventory Dec 43**	**1943***	**1944**	**1945****
L3 tankette	148	0	17	0
L6 light tank	106	15	0	0
M3, M14, M15 medium tank	147	0	28	0
Medium command tanks	8	2	0	0
P40 medium tank	5	0	99	0
Semovente				
47/32	35	50	22	0
L6 command	0	16	30	0
75/18	131	0	55	9
M42 75/34	28	30	50	12
M42 Command	0	0	39	3
M43 75/34	0	0	10	1
M43 75/46	0	0	7	4
105/25	31	8	79	0
Total	**639**	**121**	**436**	**29**

**Production after Italian surrender*

***Production Jan–Mar, 1945*

Of the various Italian armored vehicles, the Semovente assault gun was the Wehrmacht's preferred choice for further manufacture. Indeed, production of the M15 M43 medium tank largely ended in favor of producing the associated Semovente versions. The advantage of the Semovente versions was the more powerful armament. In addition, the Semoventes fitted comfortably into German organization and tactics since they could be issued to infantry divisions in lieu of the StuG III assault guns. By the end of 1943, about 205 Semoventes had been allotted to a dozen German divisions in Italy, increasing to about 240 by the end of 1944.

Overall, the German reaction to the Italian tanks was very mixed. Most units found them to be automotively unreliable. Some units that were issued newly manufactured vehicles complained that they had so many automotive faults that they must have been sabotaged during their manufacture. The hasty transfer of Italian vehicles to German units in 1943 and early 1944 meant that many had not been refitted with German radios. This degraded their use for infantry support. Generally, the firepower of the Semovente was viewed favorably.

PzSpWg AB 41 201(i) taking part in anti-partisan operations in Yugoslavia in 1944, with a 2cm Flak 38 auf SdKfz 7/1 behind it.

Italian Beutepanzers in German service, December 31, 1944

Formation	HG C	HG F	HG Süd	SS/Polizei	Other	Sub-total operational	In repair	**Total**
L3	7	4		10	11	**32**	*8*	**40**
L6	3	23		2	4	**32**	*3*	**35**
M 13, M14	6	11				**17**	*8*	**25**
M15	3	51	1	5	4	**64**	*26*	**90**
Command	22				2	**24**	*6*	**30**
P40	5			38		**43**	*2*	**45**
Semovente 4.7cm	4	25	3	20	8	**60**	*20*	**80**
Semovente 7.5cm	50		3	9		**62**	*31*	**93**
Semovente 10.5 cm	56					**56**	*10*	**66**
Armored cars	94	54	18	8	4	**178**	*37*	**215**
Total	**250**	**168**	**25**	**92**	**33**	**568**	**151**	**719**

HG C: Heeresgruppe C in Italy

HG F: Heeresgruppe F in the Balkans

HG Süd: Heeresgruppe Süd in Hungary

AMERICAN TANKS AND AFVS

As was the case with British tanks, American tanks were not widely used by the Wehrmacht since few operational vehicles were captured. A small number of tanks were seized in Tunisia, but captured M3 half-tracks were a much more popular addition to the German inventory. The same situation applied during the Italian campaign in 1943–44. During the fighting in the European theater in 1944–45, small numbers of US tanks and AFVs were captured and used, but mostly on a local, improvised basis. For example, in the autumn of 1944, the OKH instructed units on the Westfront to turn in any captured American tanks and AFVs. These were intended for Operation *Grief*, a scheme to use German troops disguised as Americans to capture key bridges and other objectives during the December 1944 Ardennes offensive. In the event, only five US and British Shermans were scraped up from the whole Westfront, an indication of how few were available. These were issued to Panzer-Brigade.150 Rabenhügel, but they soon proved to be unserviceable. Instead, Panther tanks and StuG III assault guns were mocked up to look like American vehicles. One of the few occasions when several Shermans were captured intact was in January 1945 during the Operation *Nordwind* offensive in Alsace, when the newly arrived 43rd Tank Battalion, 12th Armored Division, became trapped in the town of Herrlisheim. German units captured about ten serviceable M4A3 medium tanks from this battle and others involving other elements of the green 12th Armored Division. They were handed over to the 10.SS-Panzer-Division and used by 5./SS-PzRgt10. When this unit was transferred to the Eastern Front a few days later, they took these Beutepanzers with them.

An M3 light tank captured from the US 1st Armored Division during the fighting near Kasserine Pass in February 1943, seen here abandoned near the Zaghouan Roman aqueduct south of Tunis during the final fighting in Tunisia in May 1943.

The 5.Fallschirmjager-Division captured six M4 medium tanks of the 707th Tank Battalion during the fighting for Wiltz in December 1944 as part of the Ardennes offensive. They used them in subsequent fighting after painting them prominently with Balkan crosses. This one is seen abandoned a few weeks later in Esch-sur-Sûre.

GERMAN IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS FOR BEUTEPANZERS

The Heereswaffenamt issued a system of identification numbers (Kennnummer) for foreign equipment starting in March 1941 that was issued periodically in the various identification guides for foreign weapons "Kennblätter Fremdengerät". Vehicles were given a three-number code, with the first number indicating the type: armored cars (2); half-tracks (3); armored half-tracks (4); armored artillery prime-movers (6); tanks (7); and self-propelled guns (8). The three-number code was followed by a single letter indicating the country of origin as listed below:

(a)	Amerika	(n)	Norwegen
(b)	Belgien	(ö)	Österreich (Austria)
(e)	England	(p)	Polen (Poland)
(f)	Frankreich	(r)	Russland
(h)	Holland	(s)	Schweiz (Switzerland)
(i)	Italien	(t)	Tschechoslowakei (Czechoslovakia)
(j)	Jugoslawien	(u)	Ungarn (Hungary)

The most common tanks and AFVs from the 1940–41 period received this designation, but many types captured in small numbers or after 1942 never received a code number. Instead, they were referred to by their original designation, such as PzKpfw IS (r) for a captured Soviet IS heavy tank. The table below lists the major codes:

201 (h)	DAF
201 (i)	AB 41
202 (h)	Landsverk L180
202 (i)	Lince
202(r)	BA-20
203 (i)	AB 43
203(r)	BA-3, BA-6, BA-10
204 (f)	Panhard 178
303(f)	Somua MCG
304(f)	Unic P107
307(f)	Somua MCL
430 (a)	M3 half-track
601 (b)	Vickers Utility Tractor
630 (f)	Renault UE
630 (r)	T-20 Komsomolets
701 (b)	T-15
701 (f)	AMR 1933 (VM)
702 (f)	AMR 1935 (ZT)
730 (f)	Renault FT
730 (i)	Fiat 3000 B
731 (e)	Universal Carrier
731 (f)	Renault R35
731 (i)	L3 (CV35)
731(r)	T-37
732 (f)	Renault D1
732 (i)	L/3-33 flamethrower
732 (j)	Škoda Š-I-D
732 (r)	T-38

733 (f)	Renault D2
733 (r)	T-40
734 (f)	Hotchkiss H35
734 (i)	M/11-39
734 (r)	T-27
735 (f)	Hotchkiss H38/H39
736 (e)	Vickers MkVI
736 (f)	Char AMR 33
736 (i)	M13/40, M14/41
737 (e)	Tetrarch
737 (f)	FCM 36
737 (r)	T-26 obr 1931 (twin turret)
737 (i)	P40
738 (b)	ACG-1
738 (e)	Vickers Medium MkII
738 (f)	AMC 35
738 (r)	T-26 ob 1933 (45mm gun)
738 (i)	M15/42
739 (f)	Somua S35
739 (r)	OT-130, OT-133
740 (f)	Char B-1 bis
740 (r)	T-26 obr 1937
741 (e)	Cruiser A9
741 (r)	T-26 bridge-layer
742 (e)	Cruiser A10
742 (r)	BT-5, BT-7
743 (e)	Cruiser A13 MkI
743 (r)	T60, T-70

744 (e)	Cruiser A13 MkII
745 (e)	Covenanter
746 (e)	Crusader
746 (r)	T-28
747 (a)	M3 Medium Tank
747 (e)	Matilda I
747 (r)	T-34
748 (a)	M4 Medium Tank
748 (e)	Matilda II
748 (r)	T-28 obr 1937
749 (e)	Valentine
751 (r)	T-35
752(r)	SMK
753(r)	KV-1
754(r)	KV-2
755(r)	KV-1E
756(r)	KV-1 cast turret
770 (f)	Renault AMR YS
771(i)	Carro Commando M41
772 (i)	Carro Commando M42
801 (b)	Carden Lloyd Tankette with 47mm gun
801 (i)	Semoventi 90/53
802 (b)	T-13 47mm
850 (i)	Semovente 75/18
851 (i)	Semovente 75/34
852 (i)	Semovente 75/46
853 (i)	Semovente 105/25
854 (i)	Semovente M43 150/42

This captured M4A3 (76mm) was knocked out in fighting with a US M36 90mm GMC tank destroyer in fighting for Aschaffenburg in early April 1945. Besides the German crosses, the

words “Beute panzer” were painted on the side to prevent German troops from firing on it. It was knocked out by a 90mm hit on the glacis plate, as is evident above the right headlight.

FURTHER READING

Hitler's exotic menagerie of captured tanks has attracted a surprising amount of attention, despite their relatively minor combat importance. This book was based on these publications, as well as archival material in Record Group 242 Captured German Records at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland.

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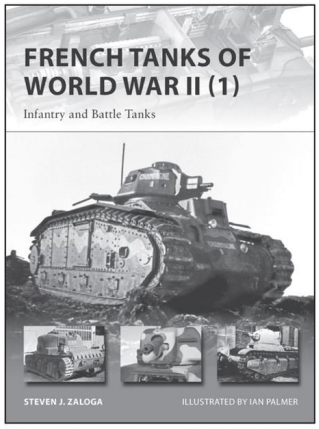

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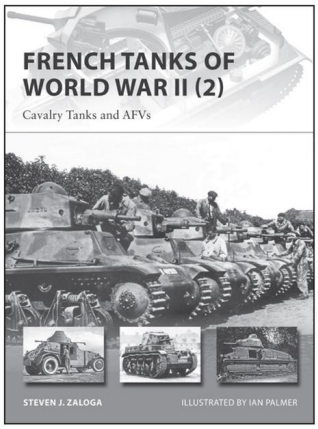

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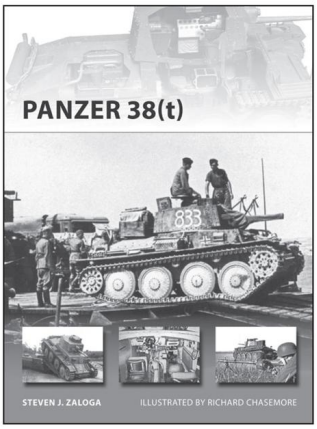

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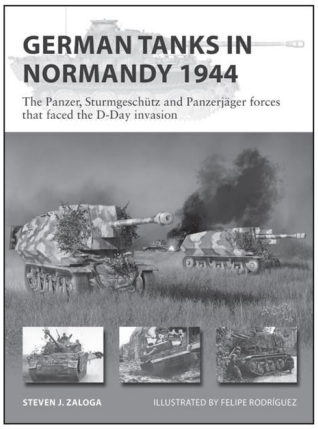
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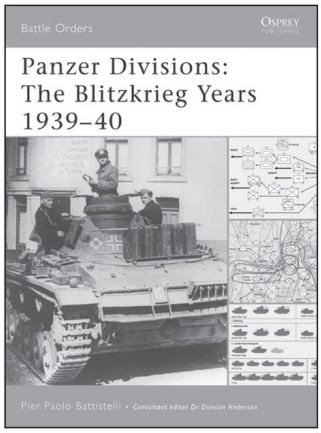

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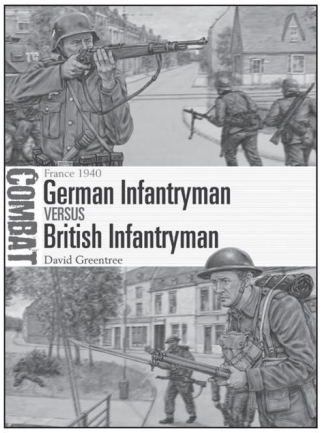

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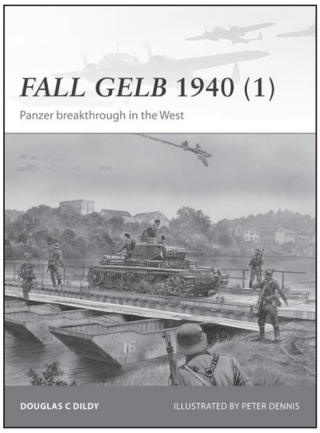

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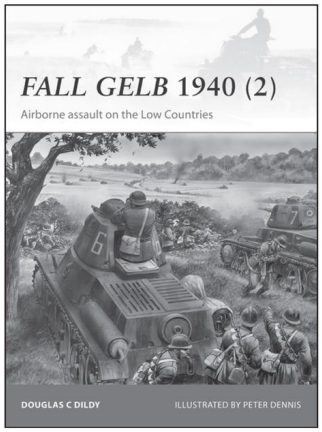

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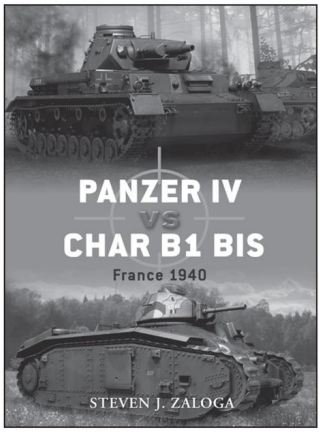

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Unless otherwise noted, all photos are from US archives.

GLOSSARY

Abteilung (Abt)	Battalion
AFV	Armored fighting vehicle
APX	Ateliers de construction de Puteaux
APX-R	Turret designed by APX and cast at Atelier de Rueil (ARL)
OKH	*Oberkommando des Heeres*: Army High Command
HWA	*Heereswaffenamt*: Army Ordnance Department
zbV	*zur besonderen Verwendung*: special purpose
Zug	Platoon